Narrationem virorum nominatorum servabit. Eccli: 39. 2.

RUSHWORTH'S DIALOGUES.

OR,

The Judgment of common sence in the choyce of *RELIGION.*

Last Edition,

Corrected and enlarg'd

BY

THOMAS WHITE, *Gent.*

Rich. ESAY 35.8. Towneley.

Hæc erit vobis directa via, ita ut stulti non errent per eam.

A PARIS.

Chez Jean Billaine, Ruë S. Jacques à l'Ensigne S. Augustin. 1654.

Doctrinam stulti despiciunt. Prov: 1. 7

TO THE READER.

AS, *in most* kinds, *some* Particulars *are more pregnant then others, and too forward to shew themselves*: *so* these Dialogues, *in the* first Impression, *crept out, like young Lapwings with the shell on their heads, and ran about, e're pen-feather'd; by their Foster-fathers connivence, rather then encouragement. But when he saw them so ventrous as to fly at a* Second Edition; *he judg'd it necessary (in defect, alas! of their Father) to imp, at least, so advantagiously their Pinions and Train, as might carry them clear from whatever ravenous Fowl should attempt to prey on them.*

Hence, Reader, *thou hast here*, (*besides a very considerable* polishment *of the whole*) *the addition of* a Preface, *and* a Fourth Dialogue: *the first*, *to shew* The necessity of certitude in Religion; *the other*, *to evince*, *that* Religion can be but one: *and* that *rationally*, *not out of pure* Will, *ordered by Almighty God*, *but* conformably to mans nature, *as a* Rule *rather then a* Law; *wherefore* (*though easily learn't and continued by* Tradition, *yet*) *of necessity*, *comprehending* more, *then all that pretend unto* Scripture *agree in*. *These additions* their Authour *has fram'd exactly according to the* Principles *and desires of his* deceased *Friend*; *out of a due affection to his Memory*, *and further to gratifie those*, *who*, *for the good they find in his works*, *love and honour It with him*.

And, *because a short Account of this blessed Man*, *may perhaps recommend*

mend more acceptably these his charitable Remains, *it will not be impertinent to subjoyn these few circumstances concerning him.*

He was born in Lincolnshire, *studied in the English Colledge at* Doway; *there was made Priest, and afterwards discharg'd the Office of* Prefect, *with general applause; all which time he disguis'd his true name* William Rushworth *under that of* Charles Rosse. *Comming into* England, *he lived in divers places with good esteem till the year* 1637, *in which he died. He was a person curious in* Divinity, Controversies, Physick, *but chiefly delighted in the* Mathematicks, *and by the name of* Robinson, *entertain'd correspondence with the learned* Oughtred. *He affected the rigour of Mathematicall discourse, ev'n in his* Controversies, *as you will perceive by this Work; and thought none truly learn'd that aym'd not at that way. These*

Dia-

Dialogues *he fram'd some years since, and shew'd to severall of his friends; and finding them very satisfactory to divers judicious persons, he intended to enlarge and publish them: but hindred by some occasions, from performing it before his death, he bequeath'd his* Papers *and this charge to a* Friend, *with whom he had often communicated his design. Here then in compliance with that Trust, they are offer'd to the World; with a fair enlargment both of matter and wel-wishes, by*

THO. WHITE.

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Preface

PREFACE.

of the neceſſity of certitude in Faith.

CONſidering with my ſelf the multiplicity of opinions, or rather phrenſies, which of late years have broken into our miſerable Country, *by the liberty* (as they call it) *of prophecying*; and with a ſad and ſollicitous heart, compaſſionating the ruinous effects of ſuch diſtractions: my thoughts at laſt wearied themſelves into this reſolution, to try whither I could find out the true *number of Religions* among us, or how many of them were ſo diverſified, as to be juſtly and neceſſarily eſteem'd *ſeveral Faiths*; and immediately I diſcern'd theſe two reflexions very uſeful to my farther diſcovery.

Firſt, that really, no accidental variance ought to be admitted to make a diſtinct Church.

Secondly, that in the way I muſt tread, even ſubſtantial differences about *particular* points, are not to be accounted ſufficient to cauſe a *plurality of Religions*; elſe I ſaw it clearly impoſſible to range ſuch an infinity of *Sects* under any determinate number of heads. Wherfore, being thus neceſſitated to confine my diſcourſe, to thoſe

those principles and motives into which each party *lastly* resolv'd their Faith; I concluded to treat all such as of one Religion, whose faith had the same forme or ultimate motive of believing, However disagreeing in the matter of their beliefes.

Following this method, it was no hard task to reduce all the several professions of Christianity (at least in our parts of the world) to the small number of two: One, *that* we call *Catholike* and another containing all the rest? for by this manner of proceeding, we are only to mark, at what joint the great and universal Communion begins to be devided into several branches; since, from the first division, properly arises the particular denomination, and consequently from thence the number we seek to be collected.

Now, because all sides pretended to the *Word of God*, as their common *Rule*, agreeing generally so far and no farther; I easily saw their first Division must necessarily be, into Believers of the Word taught or delivered *orally*, and Believers of the word taught or delivered *in paper*. As for other subdivisions, (though in essential articles) I declin'd to enquire any farther into them; lest I should have been oblig'd to that hard task of counting by the Pol how many several Reformers this last Century has produc'd. Yet meant I not by this to justifie them, who pretend to what company of Believers they please, and disallow of whom they please; for certainly, either all must be admitted, who conceive the *written word* maintains their perswasion; or another Rule assign'd, to determine who should be excluded, who receiv'd: neither of which is done by any of the modern Separatists from the Catholick

tholick Church; but some rejected, upon pretence their Doctrin is Idolatrous, blasphemous, or the like, though they are resolutely perswaded they hold with Scripture: and so, not the *formal motive*, but the *material errour* is made the cause of their not being of *one Religion*.

This startled me a little at first, to see the 39 *Articles* of *England* made one Religion with all the extravagancies of *Amsterdam*, and the late *Archbishop* of *Canterbury* of the same faith with *John* of *Leyden*: which certainly were to put the reform'd Churches into a strange ill favour'd posture clapping them neck and heels together. But searching deeper, I soon discovered, that truly the whole multitude of Reformers were so far from having one Rule among them all, that indeed they had no Rule at all among them.

For a rule or principle must be some *cleer determinate sense*, or at least the *meanes* and *power* to arrive at such a sense: and of this kinde I could discover nothing common or universally receiv'd among them; But every ones private conceit was the last Principle, into which the ambiguity of the Text came to be resolv'd: So that, in reall truth, with them there are as many Rules, as Heads, the *Letter* of the *Bible* being but the Instrument or matter, which they ply and fashion by their Fancy. Therfore I concluded they were necessarily to be distinguish'd by the *Opinions* they held; having no one thred, on which all their particular Tenets might be strung and depend, but the *Letter*, which without a *determinate sense*, is nothing; all the Rule they generally agreed in being only not to admit *that* of the Catholick Church; leaving themselves no

positive

positive Rule or Principle, nor any thing universally accepted by their whole Body, but this destroying negative, *Not to be Papists*: Yet, me thought, all these put in an express and direct claim to a Religion, if not a common one, at least every one to *that* in his own breast: but looking more narrowly into the businesse, I discern'd a third kind of people, who not so much as pretend to any Rule at all; yet are they not only admitted, but publikely acknowledg'd and cryed up for the chiefe Heads and strongest Pillars of the Reformation.

To render my discourse more intelligible, I conceive a *Religion* signifies *a Science* or Art of so governing a people, that by their due living here they may arrive at eternal happiness hereafter: For a Rule or science of bringing us to live a contented life only in this world, I take rather for a piece of Philosophy and part of Politicks, then Religion.

This suppos'd 'tis evident, since an Art or Science includes a certainty in its Rules and Principles, however in the practice and application of them may sometimes happen defects and miscarriages, the Doctrines and precepts of Religion ought to be certain and undoubted; and if the embracers of such a Profession come not to Heaven, their destruction must not in the least degree be imputed to the misguidance or deficieney of the Rule, but wholly to their neglect and disobservance of its commands. For certainly that's no way, which, though I follow with all exactness, brings me not to my end.

In oppositon to this, shoots out a new branch from the old oak of reformation and boldly professes it enough to guess at Tenets of Religion,

and

and that we ought to be ready (if more reason should appear) to change the *Bible* for the *Alcoran*; although my charity hopes the Authors intend rather a daring expression, than any probability of the case; yet why should they not, if they thought there was no certainty in the Bible and Christian Religion.

This I conceiv'd but a ripeness of the Reformation, wherto it had not formerly arriv'd, though the first buds began long since to blossom. For truly, as far as *I* have hitherto understood, none of the Arch-Hereticks that drew any followers after them ever came to so high a shamelessness, as to profess they were doubtful of what they held; but (though never so irrationally) still boasted their own cleer knowledge of all they taught, still scorn'd their Masters and Forefathers, as ignorant and absurd. Nay, the maddest among them were alwayes most deeply possest with an insolent and extravagant confidence of the security of their doctrin: Thus all the rest (however deceived, yet) pretend a Religion, and exact of their disciples an absolute credence to their errours: wheras these delicate Believers content their easie and civil natures with a dow-bak'e probability, as if they were little concern'd, whither the Religion they profest were true or false.

Yet I'le not do them the wrong to say, they had not some ground or rather occasion out of some of our Divines; who (raising more dust then they were able to keep out of their own eyes) seem to have unawares contributed to the hatching this dangerous Cockatrice, *Incertitude*, which these bold Reformers have at last shewed to the world, like *the Abomination of desolation*

standing

standing in the Temple, to be abhorr'd by all Christian hearts and true lovers of vertue.

Of these Divines, the ancienter (observing the condition of *obscurity* in our faith much inculcated both by Scripture and Fathers, and finding *obscurity* oppos'd to *evidence*, and *faith*, by it, to *Science*, and not distinguishing in *Science* the two notions, *Evidence* and *Certainty*) easily fell into this mistake, of thinking obscurity in faith the same as in opinion, yet being perswaded the *certainty of faith* was greater then of *Science*, they were much perplext how to reconcile obscurity with certainty; and so found out a distinction of *moral* and *physical* certainty, of which they thought *moral*, though a lesser, yet a certainty. Then dividing the assent of Faith into two Principles; The one, *what God said was true*; the other, *God had said the proposition to be believ'd*. To its propper proofs, which they termed the motives of credibility, they attributed this *moral certainty*. But being distrustful, that the help of the other proposition could not elevate the Conclusion to a degree of certainty, above Science and any other natural vertue; They fled some to the habit of Faith, some to previous Illuminations, or other means, as every one found most suitable to his humour.

How far this differs from *the private spirit*, which our Sectaries pretend in the interpretation of Scripture, I examine not. For though I know they bind themselvs to the motives of credibility, and by them to the Church: yet seeing these bring not an *absolute*, but onely a *moral certainty*, the assent is purely *voluntary*, not *coactive* of the understanding; and so is not perform'd by a generall Rule fit to convince others, but

deriv'd

deriv'd from a private light, granted either by the habit of faith, or by some particular illumination, both which approach so neer the way of our modern *Enthusiasts*, that it requires a quick and wary ey to discern their difference. And if it be replyed, these motives are such as all are obliged to yield to; they will be press'd to shew how all can be bound to believe, that which they evidently see may be false.

This term *morall certainty*, every one explicated not alike; but some understood by it such a certainty as makes the cause alwaies work the same effect, though it take not away the *absolute possibility* of working otherwaies. Others call'd that a *morall certainty*, which proceeds from and depends on moral principles, as commands, perswasions intreaties &c. A third explication of this word is, such a certainty as seldom fails, or such as human action is generally grounded on.

Of these three, the first ought absolutely be reckon'd in the degree of *true certainty*, and the Authors consider'd, as mistaken in undervaluing it. Am I not sure I shall never repeat in the same order all the words I have spoken this last year? yet these men wil say, I am onely *morally certain*. The second no lesse deserves the title of *true certainty*, if rightly understood. What more unquestionable, then that in *Europe* some wil remain Christians to morrow? yet this distinction diminishes it into a *morall certainty*. The third belongs to others, more bold, who have dared to affirm expressly, that the motives of credibility are absolutely insufficient to beget a certain and undoubted assurance, being themselves contain'd within the bounds of pure probability: and that when the difficulties urged

against

againſt the myſteries of Faith are compar'd with the arguments inducing to believe them, their credibility wains according to the ſtrength of the objections; which often riſe to ſo high a force, and ſtruggle ſo dangerouſly with the concluſion, that to them it ſeems weaken'd into a faint and doubtfull probability, and (as ſome expreſſe, if their mind be truly reported: For I deſire not to ſearch other mens books for their defects, if their vertues entice me not to read them) ſo far as to render the contradictories equally and indifferently ballanc'd, leaving it a drawn match, whether the myſteries of Chriſtian Religion, on which depends the worlds ſalvation, be true or falſe.

Nevertheleſſe, even theſe demand a moſt certain aſſent, and ſuch as exceeds the higheſt we give to any demonſtration or cleareſt humane evidence: And to ſupply the weakneſſe they imagine in the motives, they bring in the helping hand of omnipotency, under the name of *Grace*; which (as far as I can reach their meaning) works on the Will to make it apply the Underſtanding ſtrongly, ſo to produce this aſſent. Theſe in my conceit, ſpeak more intelligibly, though with leſſe ground and ſolidity, then their competitors: becauſe what they ſay, is not involv'd in the miſapprehenſion of the terms, as the two former; who, in a manner ſpeak right againſt their Wils, and are not conſcious of the truth they teach.

But (if I miſtake not) this third ſort of Doctors loſe the queſtion in hand by an equivocation; for truly this ſtrong aſſent of the Will; or by force of the Wil, is not certainty, but *reſolvedneſs*. And, as it is apparent, when *Æneas* is ſaid to be

certus

certus eundi, it does not signifie he was assured he should goe, but resolv'd he would goe; so he that believs by force of his Will, is not made certain by the action of the object on his understanding (which truly deserv's to be called *certainty*, and is the commendation of an intellectuall vertue, and the reall subject of this dispute) but is fix'd by his Will, either constantly, if with Reason, or obstinately, if against it, to believe such a conclusion, and act or govern his life accordingly.

However, this little imports my intention: *I* would fain learn wherin this Opinion differs from that we call the very sink of Infidelity, to say, No man nor the whole Church can chuse their Religion, upon certain and assured grounds; or more then probably. Nor ask I this metaphysically, but morally; that is, I desire to see a difference, that may concern the governing our lives and action. For, what avails it me, that the faith I hold be all true, if I know it not to be so? do I the more prudently accept it; or work more constantly, or more assured of doing well? if not, what advantage have I that indeed, it is the truer? If you say, *I* am the more fortunate, *I* understand you; but if you ask, whether *I* have more reason to wish my friends to be of my opinion then of the contrary? *I* see no ground for it. Nevertheless, one may reply; 'tis the better. *I* ask him how it's known to be the better: by faith? the question is, whether it be true, nor can give it testimony to it self; by guess? how shallow and ridiculous were so desperate an answer, and what account could be given for so stedfast an adhesion, why it should be honoured with the title of prudent constancy, rather

then ſtigmatiz'd with the brand of wilfull obſtinacy?

But to return to our new reforming Maſters, who put an exact and formally profeſſed incertitude in their beliefe; as *I* cannot deny, they proceed with art and conſequence in their diſcourſe, ſo I hope to ſhew them clearly the deſperate errour in their Principle. For though Mr. *Ruſhworth* touches not this point, but rather ſuppoſes it, as agreed on by thoſe againſt whom he diſputes; yet I being left a Teſtament-Legatary, and Tutor to this his Child, finde my ſelf oblig'd in duty to my deceaſed friend to preſerve the Eſtate of my Pupil ſecure and unmoleſted, and carefully defend him from all adverſaries, who either by their ſtrong oppoſition, or ſubtle pretences may any way endanger his diſturbance.

Since then, if there be no certainty in Religion, it is an uſeleſſe queſtion, *Whether it be to be ſought in the Church or in the Scripture?* this firſt is to be declared, to my power, as largely as is fitting for a prolocutory diſcourſe. Not repeating therfore what hitherto I have inſiſted on, That the admittance of ſuch incertitude takes away the very pretext of Religion, which muſt either be an Art to goe to Heaven by, and conſequently comprehend in it ſelf a perfect body of Rules to guide us thither; or elſe you will be forc't to ſay, (what *I* tremble to think) that the very way God himſelf has ſhewn to Heaven may poſſibly lead to Hell: firſt taking in by the way a ſmall outwork, where my adverſary may perhaps think to fortifie himſelf, *I* will advance to give the principall aſſault.

Our Savior and divers of his Diſciples have plainly

plainly told us *the Wisdom of God is Folly to man.* This speech may be interpreted into two meanings; one, that the Mysteries God teaches us, and the waies by which he governs us are so far elevated above the ordinary sciences and providences of men, that being judged by them, they appear wholy darkneſſe and ignorance, and folly. And this is the true meaning of that Sentence; For God Almighty being Reason it ſelf, & infinitely beyond the reach of men by nature, ſo far as he has not condeſcended to reveal himſelf to them; it followes, that if through pride they preſume to meaſure Gods waies by their cuſtoms, the heavenly government muſt needs appear folly to their ſhort capacities.

The other ſenſe theſe words may be wreſted to, is, that Almighty God (to draw us from our own crooked waies, and overweening love to knowledge) commands us things really ridiculous: and ſo abſurd in themſelves, and improper to our natures, that they were truly to be judged Follys; were it not the unſearchable wiſdom of God had a higher aim and drift, to bring us through ſuch by waies to eternall happineſſe.

This meaning, which (to confeſſe the truth) not only Sectaries frequently imbrace, but even ſome of our own literall Divines ſtrongly inſinuate, ſeems clearly to me (eſpecially if applyed to our preſent concernment) moſt impious and blaſphemous, and deſcended from the firſt tentation, which was to put us in conceit that God envied true knowledge to our Nature. Nor will this heavy cenſure ſeem half ſo harſh as it is juſt, if we reflect on the dangerous conſequence of ſo unreaſonable an interpretation: for though we ſhould ſet aſide the indignity impos'd on God,

and the contrariety and harm it is to an intelligent creature that it be forced to work without reason, and conducted in the principall operations of its being, quite against its understanding; this only thought, that to believe the doctrine of *Christ Jesus*, and live like Christians, is to play the fool, and an absolute known folly, seems so horrible a blasphemy, that I rather fear I have been too mild in condemning it.

Let us come therfore to our *hypothesis* and consider it both way's; (to wit) that seeing an incertainty in what we believe, nevertheless we will force our selves to believe it constantly; or take it only for a present rule of our actions and be ready to morrow to embrace a quite contrary; Is not either of these a direct and notorious folly? both agreeing in this, that I goe about the main business of my life, without knowing, or rather, directly knowing that, more then by hazzard, it may be as sure to do harme as good.

I am not ignorant the unwary Reader may easily stumble at this proposition; judging it security enough for our determination to faith, if there be a high probability on our side; as a thousand to one, or ten pound to twelve pence, Gockpit Law. Especially since Faith is a knowledge given us for *action* and no man, in any moral action or hazard, desires an ensurer in so great advantage.

To such a Reader I must reply with an intreaty that he would consider 'tis a different thing to be *an action* and to be made *for action*. An action as contradistinguish'd against speculation, is ordinarily in such individual and material circumstances, as are not capable of any certain Rule, nor can all the contingencies be comprehended

by our understanding: But the Knowledge, preambulatory to action, is often either concerning universals, easily known, or a determinate number of particulars easily comprehended. So that the nature of Action forces the Actor to unassuredness and probability, but the nature of knowledge (when 'tis such I have decipher'd) makes that person accounted rash, who is content to be hazardous in it.

Again, if this assertion be examin'd diligently, we shall find we ought to proceed with evidence even in our Action, at least as far as concerns the *formal* part of it. He that Trafficks into the *Straights* or *Indies* doubts after all his deliberation, whether his ship will arrive safe at *Cochin* or *Smirna*, and for *that* seeks an ensurer, But if he be not certain 'tis good to venture, he is a rash and unskilful Merchant; nor is there any *ensuring Office* for this, but every one's thought capable to secure himself: So that the event of *material* Action is contingent and doubtful, but the *formal* part, whether it be prudence to hazard, cannot, unless it carry evidence and certainty with it, be ventur'd on without reproach.

Farther, we must consider that of Assent, there is no necessity, but of *Action*, there is, or at least a great convenience. If a General, upon advertisement of the enemies approach, muster not up his forces and put his Army in posture to encounter them; neither will his Prince forgive such a neglect, nor his Souldiers esteem such a Commander; and yet perhaps he sees not evidence enough to assent whither the Alarme be true or false; nor is such assent necessary to his action, only he is absolutely convinced that 'tis

prudence

prudence and duty to stand upon his guard, and governs himself by that principle, whatever the event be: or whatever he thinks of the event, it imports not his action; and therfore has neither necessity nor convenience, but only the pure love of truth, to enforce a rational assent on him.

So long then as the Truth it self convinces not his judgment, what imports it him whether the probability be as 200 or 1000 to one; since, to him, (all this notwithstanding) it is unknown whether it be truth or no, and whether he doth himself good or harm in assenting to such probabilities, though he be oblig'd to act according to them. And if you reply it stands not with Gods goodness, that in a matter which concerns the total government of our lives, we should proceed prudently in following the advantage of probability, and yet undoe our selves; the answer is plain, that this necessity binds God to put an inevitable certitude in the motives of faith and not a pure probability; else he would oblige us to this hard law, of hazarding our whole well being, on what we could not rationally believe to be true.

My next Reason looks on the end of Faith; which is given us as a ground wherein to order this life, as by it to be perpetually working out the bliss that is to accompany us for ever in the next: This *order* chiefly consists in filling our souls with the love of God and with fervent desires of that felicity he has prepared for us hereafter; duties that require no less then the entire renouncing of all our affections to whatever is agreeable to flesh and bloud; and instead of present sensible satisfactions, to place our

hearts

hearts on future invisible objects, such as not only are against our sense, but seem against our reason: Now, to establish in the world a body of motives to produce a constant and general observance of commands so difficult, can we think less then a true certainty sufficient?or more then a bare probability unnecessary? Let us consider how great a check to our love of God would this one scruple give, if we should be brought to suspect that, perhaps, all those sacred Mysteries of our Saviours blessed life, bitter death, and glorious Resurrection were but pious credulities? he that can doubt of the Divinity and Omnipotency of our Saviour, will, without doubt, neither heartily adore his Person, nor confidently rely on his power: he that can say in his heart, perhaps there is no heaven, will scarce be perswaded out of his present assured delights, for possible enjoyments hereafter. Ridiculous then and wholly destructive of vertue must that conceit be, which disposes us to a readiness of putting away our Religion and espousing a new one, upon every probable argument to which we have not our selves yet met with an answer.

A *Pilot*, who, before the invention of the Loadstone, finding himself in the mid way betwixt the *Canaries* and the *Western World*, should drive with the wind indifferently to any Point of East or West, of North or South; what hope could he have of ever coming to his desired harbour. Now 'tis certain, setting Faith aside, which is our Card to guide us, we are as unskilful in steering towards beatitude, nor can *chance it self* be so lucky as to bring us thither; all force of nature being weak and insufficient to conduct

us to a supernatural end: so that really we have less ayme, then that poor Mariner, who at least came once from home, and we not so much as know we have a home to ayme at. In short, this life is a School, where we study to take our Degree in the next, and for my part I believe, when he that every day jumps from one kind of study to another, deservs to proceed Doctor, they who every day change their faith may be canoniz'd for Saints. What then can such a Faith, as changes with every blast of probability avail us? Nay, even a constant Faith, if it be from our Wills, not from the object and Master of the Will that this constancy flow's? For if it chance to be at first set wrong, the more fixt and constant, the more dangerous and prejudicial it is.

My third Exception I draw from the nature of probability; which signifies no more then a seeming glosse of truth rising from a heap of Arguments, wherof no one proves the Conclusion, nor is there such connexion betwixt any two or more, that together they gain an irresistibility: whence 'tis evident, there is nothing advanced towards the truth of the assent; since this remains known, that the position may be false notwithstanding all those appearances.

Let us look a little deeper and consider that, by the Topicks of *Aristotle*, ther's an ability given us to bring arguments without end in favour of either side; whence for any thing we know, what is more probable to day may be less to morrow, if some great Brain become affected to the contrary opinion and imploy his wit to shew what can be said for it. Thus to be more probable touches not the nature of the truth it self; but

but is wholly extrinsical, and signifies onely that men have more laboured on one side then on the other, and is as subject to mutability, as the conceits of a Sophister. So that to talk of a speculative Question, whose truth cannot be discerned by experience and events, and handle it by only probabilities, intending to rely on them, is no more to the purpose, then to throw Cross and Pile for the truth of it, or to let the fall of a staffe determin the way we are to take.

My fourth Exception striks at the nature of the business, to shew *All voluntary opinion* (that is grounded not in the understanding, but Will only) *is vitious*; a Sentence famous among the ancient Philosophers and confirm'd by S. *Austin*, that to give a direct assent to what you know to be uncertain is *Turpe*, that is, (in our ordinary locution) Sin: and hence came that famous word ἐποχὴ, which we usually phraise *to suspend our judgment*. In all propositions therfore, where we see no more then probability, it is our part to with-hold our assent, till evidence or certainty deserve it. The reason is clear, for if a man strain his Stomack with meat or drink, his Armes with pulling, or walks himself off his feet, we blame him, because he uses his body otherwise then is fitting, or out of proportion to its dispositions, and therfore wrongs it, disappointing the end and use to which nature design'd it.

Since then our understanding is our principal and most noble part, far less ought it to be strain'd against its nature: and, which encreases the unworthiness of the act, this cannot be done to the understanding, but by an inferiour, whose order is to obey and be ruled by its dictates; how much greater then is the violence offered

to

to nature, if we see the will to rack the understanding, (which sees not a sufficient reason for the verity proposed) to such a height, as to make it assent stronger to an unknown conclusion, then to the purest demonstration, if possible, which I remit to Divines to discuss.

The ordinary reply is, that, though the object be not in it self evident, yet is it *evidently credible*: an answer I am very little able to understand. For if the Replyer speak of true evidence, he waves the question; since both parties admit no evidence in Faith, but only certainty: if he speak of certainty, the credibility of the motives can have no other then evidence. So that the answer is evidently perplex'd in an equivocation. But, to come to the marrow of the question, I believe it is the answerers intention to tell us, however the object be but uncertainly proposed yet 'tis evident such proposal is sufficient to deserve *assent*: which seems to me a pure contradiction; and as much to say, a Truth not known to be such, may deserve to be believ'd, or we may at the same time know, we know not whether the Sun shine, and yet be resolv'd it shines, that is, know, we are not resolv'd, and yet be resolv'd.

I forget not, 'tis easie to admire, how Children and ignorant Persons should have a certainty in their minds, equal to the evidence even of demonstration. To which I answer; Faith is not required for it self, but for Charity; and if Charity follows out of any knowledge, in any Person, in any State, the true and proper vertue of Faith will not in such a case be necessary; I see therfore no inconvenience, to say, Faith is supply'd in such persons by a vertue weaker and

more proportionate to their capacity? Yet, if we be afraid of names and words, whose sense we understand not; at least we are assured the most unlearned are not so ill taught, but they know the famous answer of the *Collier*, *who believ'd as the Church believ'd, and the Church* in counter change *what he believ'd.* So that, even in Children there is a notion of the Churches belief, to which they joyn theirs, with such a firme and constant steadiness, that their adhesion, though not created by so many steps of evidence, as the Assent of a learned Clerk, who sees an infallibility in the motives which frame the Churches authority; yet has it, in a bulk proportion'd to their wits, the same effect of conquering their understanding and breaking into a full assent, such a one as is no way changeable, in respect of their Souls.

Add to this, that the natural evidence by which every prudent Person, in his way goes about his business; in the principles of it, has *as much certainty* as any metaphisical demonstration; being grounded on the same first foundation, that *contradictories cannot be true at once*, wherin the perpetual beating to by experience supply's the subtlety of judgment required in Sciences.

For example, a prudent man is as well resolv'd, that he who was in *France*, the instant of a murther committed at *London*, or the Child unborn, are not guilty of it, as the great Philosopher, who can demonstrate, *a body cannot be in many places at once*, or *what is not, is not active*: No less constant will he be, that *a known Liar or Slanderers word is not to be taken*, that *an honest man will be carefull of his promise*, and such like

axiomes

axiomes of humane life, as any Mathematician of his demonstration. And it is a great blindness not to see a constant Evidence running through the Main knots of Mans Government, as clearly as through all Mechanical arts and their principles, in which the events make the maxims pass for undoubted.

This being so resolv'd, to speak prudently, all questions of certainty and uncertainty unknown to the believer, are little to our purpose, as whether in a believer there be two Habits; one *infus'd*, another *by industry gain'd*, whose properties are, when an object is conveniently proposed, to know, by a secret instinct, whether it be truly reveal'd or no: if it be, then the infused habit starts up and works; if no, then the acquir'd habit comes in and deceives the believer. Nor less impertinent are all cavils about the assentings of Children and illiterate people, who never reflect nor understand what *certainty* is, but with their whol power embrace what seems *such* to them, without the least suspition of a possibility to fail. For it being cleer, that their love and action proceeds without duplicity and wavering, 'tis apparent they have Faith sufficient to gain Heaven, if their Wills and Works light on the Truth: and so, it little imports how mutable their assent be; for mutability in them signifies only weakness; or, whether they have all the conditions Divines require to the perfection of Theological Faith, so they have enough to work Charity in them.

The two questions, therefore, which truly deserve discussion, are only these: First, whether a desultory assent (which so agrees to this side, that the believer sees it fallible, and

doubts

"doubts not, but on better information, to "change it) be sufficient for Christian life and actions? The other is, when he conceives the reasons on which he is to ground his judgement, insufficient of themselvs to *breed* an assent, Whether it be a Vertue or rather Wilfulnesse and "sin, to *force* it? especially, seeing the very motives, that prevail with his Will to command this assent, must needs be lyable to the same defect.

Both these questions entrench upon the certitude of faith in common, both Incertitudes (or defects of certitude) make a Religion, either absolutely none, or not a rationall one, but a meer folly; and therefore the questions deserve great consideration, or rather none at all: For as that famous saying permitted not even to doubt to talk, *whether there be a God or no*, so't is an impiety to dispute, whether there be a Religion? Or

And now was I come to a desired end, feared I not the censure of partiality, acknowledging, of two sayings, which I seem to condemn, as equally prejudiciall to Christianity, the one for an opinion of Divines, the other flat Heresie or worse. To give therfore an account of this different treaty, I must advertise my Reader to remember, that as faith depends from our will, so also doth Heresie. So that the pure fault of understanding renders no man an Heretick: but if it be found that in a question of faith he maintains what is necessary for Christian action, though in doing so he contradict himself, and truly in respect of pure understanding he maintains it not, yet by will he does: such a man is no Heretick, nay not so much as his opinion is truly and formally

mally but materially hereticall.

Now to specifie this in our present case. As to this saying which we stile an opinion of Divines, we see they endeavouring to maintain the obscurity of faith jointly with certainty, which is the Catholick tenet, and missing of the true notion of obscurity, take incertitude instead of it, and so defend certainty and incertainty together in faith. These Authors therefore intend to speak Catholickly, and it is their learning, not their pious affection fails them. Again, that which is necessary to Christian action is the firm resolution of the assent to the verities believ'd: this, though they make irrationall, yet they conserve and command it; wherfore they may be condemned of errour in Theology, but not of breach of faith, even in Opinion.

By this you see the other sentence, which sticks not wholly to enervate the strength of certainty in Christian doctrine, is altogether abominable; breaking in pieces the sacred band of the unity of the Church. For admitting once, that a point of faith be in its self truly dubious and questionable, what testimony of the Church, what law of God can bind any to believe it? Certainly so desperate a proceeding were not only against the goodnesse of God, but directly opposite to the Law of nature, and the very essence of a rationall creature.

But there is yet an equivocation to be avoided, by declaring what is meant by this proposition, *Faith is certain*; which in short is, That the means of comming to the assent of Faith, are really so firm and certain, that a man may, and all such as goe exactly to work, doe arrive at so rationall a fixednesse in it, that no opposition of reason,

reaſon, duly managed, can draw them from it. By this declaration I intend to cut off that ambiguity by which faith is called *certain*, ſometimes, becauſe the object of it is either true, neceſſary, or revealed; all which make but a *materiall* and improper certainty. I mean likewiſe to exempt my ſelf from the objection of ſuch, who, having only good wits, venter to meddle and judge of Metaphyſicks, an art they know nothing of, and muſt ſtudy long to have enough to judge of its oppoſitions: As alſo thoſe who expect to finde it, in a contentious way, in the pure letter of the *Scripture*, and think by meer Grammar to make out a certainty from the Text of the Bible. And, in a word, from all who undertake to judge by skils and ſciences they are not grounded in.

I conclude therefore, The prudent man, converſant in humane actions: cannot be drawn away from the Catholik Fath by arguments collected out of prudentiall motives; the Metaphyſitian, by motives of Metaphyſicks; the skilfull in the Laws of interpreting Scripture, by objections drawn from the letter, &c. though if this Order be not obſerv'd, that every one confine himſelfe to the profeſſion wherein he is a maſter, it may perhaps not be impoſſible to puzzle him with ſubtilties and ſpeculations unproportion'd to his particular skill and ability.

In other difficulties about certainty, as who hath this certainty, of what neceſſity it is to particular perſons, and the like, I intend not to engage, nor think it a queſtion of controverſial Divinity, which is the ſubject of this Book.

Wherefore, having paid my duty to the memory of my deceaſed friend, and preven-

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ted the ſhock my Reader might have been offended at in his beginnings, I retire my thoughts to what is more neceſſary to my ſelf, leaving my welwiſhes to attend the Readers progreſſe.

THE

THE FIRST DIALOGUE.

The Introduction.

Nephew.

SInce (*Uncle*) this is the first day of the New Year, methinks it would be a great offence to employ it wholly in sports and pastimes, and not season it by some vertuous and serious discourse, which may engage and serve me for a pattern all the year after. And though I break in thus abruptly upon your retirement and surprize you, yet I am sure you (whom well-spent age and travels have enabled to give light and guidance to my unsetled youth) can easily read me such a Lesson as may leave a relish of of piety in my mind.

Uncle. I should be very unkind, Cousin, if I refus'd such a request to you, whom the marriage of my neareſt kinswoman obliges me to love and tender, as one who has my own blood, and joy in his care and custody. But as I am glad to see

this inclination in you, which I hope will strengthen with your age, so the choice of the time, being now the hottest season of the day for gaming, makes me wonder at your unusual temperance.

Nephew. Yesternight was the end of the last year, and so I made even with the world; nor have I yet begun again: and therefore I took occasion to withdraw my self, when the company sate down to play, with intent to bestow somewhat better the little that's left of this good day.

Uncle Why then, *Cousin*, I think I know my Theme: you lost all your money last night, and now you are weary with looking on. Whilst therefore you are in this aversion and distaste with such idle and unprofitable entertainments, I shall gladly take hold of this advantage, and joyn with your ill fortune to turn your thoughts upon the chiefest and most important affair you can have on earth. You know you were born and bred a *Catholick*: you know it is their belief that they are all obliged to venture their lives and estates for the profession of their faith. Is it not then a great shame for a *Catholick* Gentleman to learn exactly how to govern his temporal interests, Till his grounds, breed his cattel, sollicite his suits in law, and manage all to the best advantage; yet never study to comprehend those many and excellent motives, why in such occasion he ought to hazard, and lose, nay cast all away, in the very sight of his lamenting friends, some upbraiding, some condemning his action, as foolish and indiscreet?

Nephew. I pray, *Uncle*, lay not so hard a censure on your Kinsman, nor think me so ignorant of

of those things, without the knowledg whereof I cannot be a *Catholick*. We are not admitted to the Sacraments, nor indeed deserve the honorable Title of *Catholicks*, unless we believe the eternal rewards prepared in heaven, are far beyond the vain and transitory pleasures of this world. And truly considering what *Christ Jesus* has done and suffered for us, it were most base and unworthy a gratefull soul to fear the yeilding up life and all, when his honour and glory are concerned. Nor is it possible more violent and efficacious motives can be given to a noble heart, then so admirable a love from so excellent a person: I confess if you search into the metaphysical grounds and principles of these truths, I should perhaps be short of giving a full satisfaction; but my age and natural unstedfastness plead my excuse: peradventure when I grow older I may prove more bookish, and turn ore the Scriptures and Fathers; and so become able to give a more sollid account of our *Tenets*, then as yet can reasonably be expected at my hands.

Uncle. Fear not *Cousin*, any hard measure from me, who love you so tenderly; nor is that the way I mean to take. But since the greater part of your kindred are of a different belief, I desire you may be enabled to give them satisfaction, why you adhere so strongly to the Catholick Religion, as to endanger your own and your posterities temporal ruine, for the maintenance of that faith and profession. Neither am I ignorant of your youthfull disposition; and therefore purposly intend to abstain from mystical and sublime metaphysicks; and only, or at least chiefly make use of what you know already, what common sense and ordinary natural reason is a-

able to perform. And to make the first breach, Pray tell me, *Cousin*, what answer would you give to a near friend, or other prudent person, who should blame you for ruining your estate in the defence of a position against the judgment of your kindred and acquaintance, and contrary to the Laws of the State where you live?

Nephew. I would lay open to him, that our Church has been alwaies eminently visible; our Doctrine alwaies preach'd from Christs time in all Countries of the world; what an infinity of holy Martyrs and learned men we have had; how all Christian Nations have bee n converted by us: motivs able to secure any wise man fromdoubting, and abundantly sufficient to convince the truth on our side; our Adversaries being but upstarts of little more then an hundred years old. Which if any should contest and deny, I would offer to produce men, who should justifie all I said against any Doctor he could bring.

Uncle. Very well, but if your friend reply, They willingly confess these things have been done by the common Ancestors of both Catholicks and Protestants, which were the true Church; but many errors, incroaching by little & little, have crept in among them; which, when they were discovered, those, who now adhere to the Roman Church, would not acknowledg, but through obstinacy and desire of Soveraignty, brake communion. And further, that these differences are not truly in Religion, but in opinion: so that both sides remain still parts of the true Church; though so much transported by the heat of their first passions, that causelessly they deny communion one to the other. And

saies he, If you look into the points of these divisions, they are but such as lie in the bosome of the Roman Church it self, betwixt *Thomists* and *Scotists*, *Dominicans* and *Jesuits*, who proceed even to charge one another with *Pelagianism* and *Calvinism*; which nevertheless makes them not different Churches, even by the Catholicks own confession. Why then should the Protestants be esteemed of another Church then the Catholicks? What would you answer to this?

Nep. I am not so short sighted, but I can clearly discern that all differences ought not to make a breach in Churches; and yet some may. For I see men go to Law and maintain their pretentions with loud debates; yet both parties not only tollerated in the Commonwealth, but held good members of it: Others I see condemn'd and punish'd for their quarrels and contentions. And if I mistake not, the reason of this disparity is, that as long as these controversies are betwixt private persons, they are suffered and conniv'd at; but if once the Publick Authority take part with one side, giving judgment in the cause disputed, and thereby interesse it self in the business, if then the other yeild not, he is justly accounted punishable, and an evil member of the Commonwealth. And indeed, thus to disagree, under a Head or Rule, which can bring the dissenters to peace, is rather an union then a difference; because they both consent in a mutually acknowledg'd root of unity, stronger then the causes of their divisions: and therefore their disputes last only for a time, till that Head and Rule have a convenient opportunity of reducing them to a full and total agreement. This daily experience teaches us in our own Country, where

the Supreme Power having once given a final sentence betwixt the parties, their suit is ended; and who should then disobey, would be both severely and justly punished for contempt. So in the spiritual Commonwealth, the Church, such differences as are among those who refer themselves to her judgment, may safely be tolerated, to what terms soever the parties grow among themselves. But such as trench on her Authority, and are betwixt those, whereof the one party will not acknowledg her defining power, nor stand to her decision; such differences make Aliens, and justly deserve to be cut off from communion.

Uncle. You have discoursed well, but not home, at least to the second part of the reply, about the points themselves, whither they be only matters of opinion or no, what say you to that?

Nephew. Nothing more evident to me, then that many points disputed betwixt *Catholicks* and *Protestants* are most material and substantial. For suppose Christ's body be truly and really in the blessed Sacrament, and that 'tis God himself, which the Priest shews the people to adore, surely it can be no slight offence to deny him due honour; nor contrariwise a small crime to adore that for God which truly is not so. If *Christ* have left the authority of *Government* to Bishops, of *Absolution* from sins to Priests; certainly it is no indifferent nor petty business to take them out of the Church. If it be Idolatry to honour Images, pray to Saints, and the like, can we think it no great matter whether we do so or no; seeing the Scripture so full of plagues falling on the *Jews* for Idolatry?

Uncle.

Uncle. But *Cousin*, may not a Protestant reply, That if one of the Tenets controverted betwixt *Thomists* and *Scotists* be *Pelagianism*, the other *Calvinism*, can you think opinions branded with so heavy a censure, to be of light importance? Wherefore he'll tell you, all such points are very hard questions; that grave, learned and unpassionate Doctors constantly defend both sides, and therefore whatever the truth be in it self, yet so long as God Almightly sees our hearts right towards him, and that we desire to do what his Law teaches us, so far as we are able to know it; all these and the like opinions are only material errors, and hinder not from being good Christians.

Nephew. Truly, *Uncle*, you have puzzled me now; for unless such opinions trench on the Churches authority, why should she not bear with them, but so severely cast out of communion, and shut heaven gates against the Authors and beginners of them? And unless there be some necessity why certain points are to be known by the whole Church, others not, I confess I cannot answer you; But I come to learn: and therefore when my own discourse reaches not to clear the difficulty, I must crave your helping hand to direct me; and I shall think the year happily begun, if you make me understand what points are to be known of necessity, and why? but first, I beseech you teach me

SECT. 2.

Whence proceeds and depends the necessity of knowing points of Religion.

UNCLE. To set you in the way, you must first tell me what you think this word (*necessity*) imports, so far as it concerns our purpose?

Nephew. You know, Sir, I am no great Clark, and therefore cannot speak of *necessity*, neither as a Gramarian nor Logician: but as far as I understand and intend by my question, there are two sorts of *necessities*; one so absolute that the thing we desire, cannot without such a means be any wayes effected: The other, in respect of such a means, without which our desire cannot be well and conveniently obtained. For as we commonly say such a thing *cannot* be done, when it is only extream hard and painfull: So usually we call that *necessary*, without which our desire cannot be fulfilled but with great labour and difficulty; though sometimes we mean by *necessary*, that, without which our purpose cannot absolutely be compassed.

Uncle. Believe me *Cousin*, you need neither Gramarian nor Logician to mend what you have said. But since you are so skilfull, that already you see what is necessary in general, to wit, *the knowledg of Christian Doctrine*, and what it is to be *necessary*, I will proceed to a further demand; giving you first this *caveat*, That my intention is not to examin or declare what expres and distinct knowledg or belief every individual person ought to have, without which he cannot possibly

bly be saved; this being a matter depending on so many secret and unknown circumstances, that it seems a case specially reserv'd to the Court of Heaven, as only befitting Gods infinite wisdom and divine justice: though sometimes a prudent man may shrewdly guess; and (upon supposition of a particular persons dying without repentance, in a positive and wilfull contradicting belief to the Doctrine of the Catholick Church) it would be no breach of charity to conclude his damnation. Yet at this present we will only speak of the *necessity* of knowing and believing several controverted points of Christian Doctrine, in respect of a Church or Company of professed Christians in common; and not as the knowledg thereof is necessary to every particular member. Now therefore tell me for what end is this knowledg of Christian Doctrin necessary?

Nephew. That I suppose we all agree to be heaven, or, in more learned terms, the sight or true and proper knowledg of Almighty God, who being the Cause and Creator of all things, he that clearly sees, and truly knows Him, will see and know all other things in Him; which yet altogether fall so far short of giving the content enjoy'd by seeing Him, that the contemplation of Himself is only accounted Bliss; and the sight of all the rest but a retinue and consequence of that first and chief Vision, which of it self alone is our essential happiness.

Uncle. This I confess, *Cousin*, is both very true, and very well said; but yet I must retrive another answer: for sure you have balkt something. What connexion is there betwixt the knowledg of Christian Doctrine and seeing Almighty God? Something certainly must be betwixt

twixt them, in order to which, the knowledg of Christian faith will be more immediately necessary: Wherein if you can satisfie me, we shall easilyer discover and conceive how far this belief of Christian Doctrine is necessary for us.

Nephew. I have been taught no further then to know what *I* ought to believe and do; And that in believing and doing so, *I* shall come to heaven.

Uncle. And were you not taught that the Commandments are resumed and comprehended in these two; *The love of God and your neighbour?*

Nephew. Yes; but what that appertains to your question, *I* understand not; unless peradventure your meaning be, the accomplishment of these two Laws is the immediate step to our Bliss. Which though *I* see is very likely, yet do *I* not fully conceive why it should be so; unless heaven go by wishing; whereas *I* have still been taught it goes by working, and violence must carry it.

Uncle. Did you never take notice of your self, when you hearken to a discourse of any subject you vehemently desire to know, how attentive you are? how fearfull the least word should slip unheard, or not understood? how quiet you keep all your thoughts? how still and untroubled your phansie? that what you hear may sink down into your soul, as distinctly, in the same frame and order as it flows from the speaker? whence you see, the love or desire to learn any thing, is the most efficacious disposition for the attainment of its knowledg. Now the whole time of this life, and conversation of the soul in the body, being given and ordained to prepare and dispose us for

 the

the next life. *Is* it not then evident that the soul, which most desires to see and know God, that is, which most loves God here, and particularly in the hour of its departure, goes out of the body with the best and perfectest preparation and disposition to see and know God hereafter, which is our expected and eternal happiness?

Nor is this against what you have been taught; for Love is the most active, and consequently the most violent thing in the world; and therefore, if heaven must be obtained by violence, love certainly must be the way? Thus then you see, we are to consider the necessity of controverted points in religion, with respect to the influence they have of their own nature, on the minds of those that believe and profess Christianity, to make them love God, and desire to see him. For since this love and desire is the immediate means and direct way to heaven, it must needs follow, that according as any Doctrine produces or contributes to this effect in the souls of Christians, the necessity of such Doctrine must be of the same degree. There is a necessity of believing all points of faith in general, out of another principle, *the Churches Proposal*, whose Authority we must accept and believe in all or none, being the same reason and motive in every one; but this *I* shall take occasion another time to treat of.

Perhaps you will say *if* this be so, what needs the knowledg of Christian Doctrine? can there be imagined a greater motive of love then that God is, and that he is Goodness it self? *Is* not this alone sufficient to make all creatures melt into the love of him? And this surely may be discern'd by pure natural reason. Why then is the knowledg of points, disputed betwixt Protestants,

testants and us, held so necessary? Nay to what end must we needs know any part of Christs Law, for the attaining of Bliss, since love will do it; and the most efficacious motive of love is to be had without it?

Nephew. You have pos'd me now; for truly I see, that so high a degree of goodness is able to ravish all the hearts in the world; a truth, so cleer and common, that it needs no proof. Wherefore, methinks, if we would consider and follow this motive of Gods infinite goodness, we could not want love; and not wanting love, according to your discourse, we must infallibly attain everlasting happiness. Why then any other knowledg should be absolutely necessary, I see not; muchless on what ground we should build this assertion

SECT. 3.

That the Doctrines wherein the Arrians and other Ancient Hereticks differ'd from Catholicks, are points of necessity to be known and believed.

VNCLE. What think you, *Cousin*, if the motive of love we speak of, were such, that only some few, and those great Clarks, were able to reach and comprehend, and consequently be moved and affected with? Doe you not conceive some other more easie, more general, and more common motive necessary, by which the people and ordinary sort may be drawn and excited to their duty; or can you imagin that mankind could be said to have sufficient means of attaining

ing to Bliss and happiness, if it had only such an *one*, as very few could make use of? And that you may better understand my question, suppose on the one side such a means as very few could reach, on the other, such an one as were accommodated to the capacity of every one, do you not see, that to say mankind may be saved by *this* or *that* means, has a quite different sense? Mankind in the one, signifying the whole multitude, in the other a small, or as it were no part thereof: For any part, so little, that it bears no moral proportion to the whole, is, in our manner of speaking, accounted as none. Ought we not then conclude with a clear assent, that it is necessary the means of salvation be of this more general and common nature?

Nephew. I doubt it not; and my own interest makes me more inclin'd to your opinion, being God knows of the weaker sort. And when *I* consider the good of salvation, and the misery which follows the loss of heaven, and that we all acknowledg every one capable of happiness, 'tis evident the means of attaining such an infinite *good*, to which we are all ordained, ought necessarily be placed, and ly within the reach of al, or at least most part of men. But yet *I* see not why the infinit goodness of God is not a motive sufficiently general and common, to excite and affect all the world.

Uncle. You must consider, *Cousin*, there are as it were three steps or degrees, by which we climb or tend to any *good*. The *first*, to apprehend or understand what it is. The *second*, to conceit and esteem it. And the *third*, to desire and pursue it. And in the prosecution thereof, to prefer it before all other goods that deserve not so well,

well, and in our case, before all other whatsoever (as being the greatest of all.) These three degrees are so disposed, that the last cannot stand without the second, nor that without the first; though contrariwise, the first may be without the second, and that without the third, by reason of mans weakness. Now if you represent to your thought, that *God Almighty* and his *Goodness* is the most simple, sublime, and abstract thing that can possibly be imagined; and reflect but on the nature of Angels, or of a Soul, nay of a corporal substance, separated from all his sensible accidents: if you had the experience I have, you would say it were hard, even for the best wits, to apprehend rightly, and discourse consequently of these things. And shall we not then think it either absolutely impossible, or extreamly difficult to make the grosser sort of heads frame any firm and steddy apprehension of *God* and his *Goodness*? Surely we may. And the reason is, because sense and sensible objects are the perpetual matter wherein our understandings are exercised, not only in our childhood and youth, but even through our whole life; unless some few, by the study of Metaphysicks elevate their souls above the ordinary pitch of men, and common course of nature. Wherefore it must needs be very hard, if not impossible, for the greatest part of mankind to work as it were out of their own bowels any fitting conceit or Idea of *Almighty God* and his *goodness*. Look but on the Jews, who had this knowledg inculcated into them by perpetual miracles and Prophets; yet they could not keep themselves long from running after Idols, because they had nothing to entertain their phansie and sensible manner of understanding.

ding. And now if you call to mind the common saying of Philosophers, that *nihil est volitum quod non sit præcognitum*, to which is parallel the Poets Apothegm,

——*Oculi sunt in amore duces.*

You shall find that what is not well rooted and imprinted in the *understanding*, can never be deeply fixed in the *will*, nor consequently the *will* efficaciously moved and affected by it: And that *nothing*, and *I know not what* are of the same force and effect in our case; according to *Aristotles* maxime, in *respect of love*, It is all one *not to be*, and *not to be known*. Whence it must necessarily follow, that 'tis impossible the greatest part of mankind (being unable to make any strong and deep conceit of *God* and his *goodness*) should be efficaciously moved and affected with that, of which they have so dim and slender a notion. And if a Preacher after a long discourse of the *Love of God*, and his great benefits towards us, in the order of nature, could not give a satisfactory account (through the weakness of his Auditory) to one that should ask him, *Who is God*, or *what is he* that hath done all these things for us? Would not his learned labours vanish into a dream; and the people depart as from a Play, where they wept at a thing which concerned them not, and were no longer carried away with't, then whilst they sate hearing? I could cite a witness, and name a Lady of your acquaintance, of as sweet a nature and pure understanding as is to be found among a thousand; with whom, having sometimes occasion to discourse about the state of the next life, she has often told me she believ'd all those

those fine things, being alwaies taught to do so, but that they seem'd to her as things in a dream; for, saies she, *I shall never be able to conceive what a soul is, when all the body is taken away.*

Nephew. Truly, *Uncle*, you have quite convinced me: for as I hear men talk of nothing more familiarly, then God and his *goodness*; so I see, if they discourse but of an *Angel*, they presently conceit him to have a body and wings. And if you should offer to force them out of it, they would quickly be at a strange loss. So that really not one in ten thousand can make a right conceit of spiritual objects. And if you talk to the common people of Heaven, and the Beatifical Vision, they conceive it but a dry thing, to sit looking on God Almighty, and singing Psalms for all eternity.

Uncle. Well then, this being established, that *Gods goodness* is so abstract and sublime, that very few can either know or love it sufficiently in it self; *Suppose* Almighty God of his infinite mercy towards us, has so allaid and temper'd this too high and inconceivable Object, by assuming mans nature on him, that it is become familiar and palpable, even to the weakest and grossest understandings; in so much that any how dull soever, may, with sensible facility, fix his mind and love upon it; nay, if he has adjoyn'd to this the greatest causes of love that the heart of man can desire, or the Power of God perform, *those infinite pains and sufferings of our Saviours blessed life, and bitter death*; whose tender expressions we find recorded in the holy History of the Gospel; can we think that, who takes this point of *Gods Incarnation* out of the Church, by either denying

nying, or donbring it, does not move an *Important stone*, and attempt to deprive the world of a doctrine extreamly and fundamentally necessary?

Nephew. 'Tis cleat in my mind; such a false Prophet as would offer to pull down this Pillar of the Church, whate're he prates of Christ, and bears his name in show, is in truth no Christian. For by his wicked and desperate heresie, he quite takes away *Christ*, and annullates his coming. Wherefore if there be any such, no sword, no fire, no torment sufficient to exterminate him; no aversion, no horror, no abomination great enough to make true Christians avoid him.

Uncle. I commend your zeal. Now then cast your eyes on the Oriental Heresies, which anciently reign'd; whereof some denyed Christ to be God; some contradicted his being *man*; some said, he was neither God nor *man*; but a third thing made of both; some, that he was two things, whereof one was *God*, the other *man*; All agreed in this, that the same person was not truly *God* and *man*; and consequently took away this efficacious means, and pregnant motive of love, that God *did*, and *suffer'd* for us those sensible and easily conceiv'd *benefits*, which he could not, unless he were *man*. And in this consists the great and main help of humane nature, that, In the person of a *true and sensible man*, we might fix our hearts, and settle our utmost desires on our eternal good and happiness. We may therefore conclude with *S. John*, *Whoever dissolves Christ, is Antichrist*; Which all these ancient Heretieks dangerously attempted. To whom we may annex all the Authors of Heresies concerning the *Blessed Trinity*, the knowledg whereof being re-

veal'd

vealed and delivered to direct us in this great mysterie of the *Incarnation*, the errors against *that* must needs reflect upon *this*, and be of the same nature and importance, and consequently of the same necessity; by reason this mystery of the *Incarnation* cannot stand unless that of the Trinity be also true.

Nephew. I am fully satisfied in this point; but pray instruct me, *Uncle*, is not

Sect. 4.

The belief of the Hierarchy established by Christ in his Church, likewise of necessity?

FOr what avails it mankind, that there are such easy means to com to heaven; if out of weaknes, prejudice or negligence they look not after it? Surely I cannot see but such a state would only contribute to the increase of their damnation: For like an ambitious man, who whilst he is yet a farr off from the honour he aspires to, can bear it patiently; but if once he come to a fair possibility, and have it as it were in his hand, then if he miss, he is incapable of all comfort, and thinks himself the most unfortunate and miserable person in the world: so I conceive when a soul is out of the body, and comes to see how easily she might have attain'd that eternal Bliss and Happines to which she was ordained; and that through her own neglect and carelesnes, she is now to be everlastingly deprived thereof; O God! how infinitely will she be griev'd and tormented? how horribly curse her self, and thereby increase her pain and misery! *Uncle.*

Uncle. You say well; and can you then doubt, can any Christian think, but tis a point of great necessity to man-kinde, If there be any *Order* established by *Christ Iesus* in his Church, to make men embrace, accept, and pursue those facile means to salvation; that they know and believe it? Can a man of common sense and judgement imagine that this is not a point of extreme importance? Or that who disagrees about this position, differs only in matter of Opinion, wherein every one may hold what he pleases, and not in a doctrin substantially and fundamentally necessary to salvation?

Nephew. I confesse, when I consider the frailty of man, and see how easily, how ordinarily he is withdrawn from *willing* and *following* the means of his beatitude, by the least terrestrial, sensual, and momentary pleasure, it were madnesse in me to believe, that, *supposing* there be any such *Order* established by Christ in his Church, to incite and provoke an acceptance and practice of these *saving* means; it were, I say, madnesse to deny the knowledge and belief of such an *Order* to be one of the most important and necessary Articles of Christian Faith.

Uncle. Remember then, *Cousin*, the three steps or degrees we mention'd before, of *knowing*, *esteeming*, and *pursuing* any *good*: And you will find, that for the *first*, it is necessary the truth of Christian doctrine be entirely conserv'd & often inculcated into our hearts and memories. For the *second*, that those who are to perform *this*, have such qualities as will give them credit, and incline our minds to believe them. And for the *third*, that there be means taken (so far as human Nature will permit) to cut off all such impedi-

ments,

ments, as hinder men from preferring eternal good, before the temporal temptations, and sensual pleasures of this life. The *first* of these conditions requires, That there be Persons appointed, to watch over the whole body of Faith, and to have care of the people, by instructing and often putting them in mind of those doctrines that concern their duty. Which if *Christ* have done, certainly whoever seeks to change his *Order* and *appointment*, quarrels not on a slight and trivial, but a most weighty and necessary point.

Nephew. I see well, that who endeavours to distroy such an *Order* established by Christ, play's with his Church, as *Esop's* Wolves did with the sheep, offering them prey, on condition they would deliver up their dogs, which being done, they immediatly broke in and worry'd the whole flock. And me thinks, common sense tells me, there cannot be a point in all Christian doctrine, of greater importance then this. For when I consider, why Treason is judg'd the highest offence that can be committed in a Common-Wealth, I see t'is because no law can subsist without Officers to maintain its authority and oversee its observances: and who strikes at these Guards in a Common-wealth (of what nature soever it be) strikes at the very essential form of it, at all the Laws, and all what ever conserves the peace and liberty of the whole people under that Government. Whence t'is evident by natural reason that, who strives to remove and abolish *those* whom God hath placed to guard his Church, endangers the totall ruin thereof.

Uncle. 'Tis true, and you may thence inferr, that questions concerning the Pope's authority over Bishops, and their's over Priests, and the

Priests

Priests over the laity are of greater moment, then at first sight can easily be imagin'd: and that whoever projects the abolishment of this Hierarchy, aims at no lesse then the utter overthrow of Religion, and ruin of the Church, planted by *Christ Jesus* with so much sweat and blood, and espoused to himself so dearly with his sacred promises. These are the *Angels* to whom *God* has trusted and committed the *charge of his flock*. These are *they*, by whose continual succession we convince the perpetuity of the Catholike Church. These are the *men*, who, when any new *Blasphemy* arises, *meet in Councils, to give testimony to the doctrine of Christ ever dwelling in the harts of the faithfull*, and, by the weight of their Authority, *crush the serpents head*. These are *they*, who in their wisdomes, may enact laws and Canons to Christs flock; and correct abuses both in discipline and morality, leaving still untouch'd Christs sacred institutions. And therefore, who ever plots the extirpation or infringement of this authority, sets his *axe to the root of faith and vertue*, by which the Church of Christ has so long subsisted; Nay, even in schismatical Churches, those that esteem themselves more wise and sober then the rest of their brethren Reformers, and more approching to Statesmen, have still endeavour'd to suppress all Anti-Hierarchists, still maintain'd a kind of Ecclesiasticall Government; lest, by degrees they should fall into the disorders and confusion of Anarchy.

Nephew. Certainly, no prudent and moderate Person can doubt of the importance of this point. And me thinks, *Uncle*, these zealous *Societies* do to the maintainers of this Hierarchy, as *Diogenes* did to *Plato*, scorning his vanity with a far greater

ter pride, for whil'st they cry out against the ambition of those who seek these dignities, established by Christ in his Church, they discover a deeper pride in their own hearts by endeavoring to destroy so sacred an *Institution*, that themselves may usurp the power and place of their proper Governors. But to the second degree of the *division* you made, do you think

SECT. 5.

That the administration of the Sacraments, by the Hierarchy, is of such great necessity?

UNCLE. Give mee first your judgement, *Cousin*, what power preeminency, and qualities do you believe necessary for these Guards and Teachers of the Christian law, that the people may conceit the doctrine they preach, and think them to be of moment? for surely, the most part of men have need of all imaginable helps to elevate and raise their minds to celestial cogitations?

Nephew. I see well enough they ought to have credit with the people; and not onely be accounted wise and good, but wiser and better then the Laiery, for I have heard the Prophets curse cited, *sicut populus sic & Sacerdos.* But this, me thinks, should not touch upon any necessary point of faith, seeing it depends on their particular lives and imployments, which are known by sense and experience, and not by any tradition from our Forefathers.

Uncle. You are mistaken; for though 'tis true the Clergies evill conversation may disgrace the mo-

motives of reverence bestow'd on them by *Christ Iesus*, yet if they deport themselves but tolerably, Christ may have given them such eminent power and dignity that they will not want a respect fit and conformable to their function and profession. And truly not without necessity; if we consider the credulity and obedience requir'd at the peoples hands: Credulity, of things above nature, nay beyond all the fables (be it spoken with respect) that ever man invented: Obedience, to the hazarding their lives and estates, nay to the entire ruin of themselves and posterity (in regard of this world) when these *Instructers* shall tell them, the law of God commands it, as their absolute duty. Now as Kings and Magistrates find by experience, that Pomps and Ceremonies, and the reserving certain actions and creations to themselves, breed in their subjects (and in strangers too) an awfull respect and honour towards their Persons and Dignity's. and therefore are very carefull how they impart and communicate them to others, still keeping at their own particular dispose some Regal priviledges and prerogatives: So our eternal King, *Christ Iesus*, not unmindfull of his Ministers, left, to them onely, the Churches Pomps and solemnity's, but specially the Sacraments, to advance their credit and authority: To Bishops he committed the Power of Consecrating Priests, and of giving the Holy Ghost or *Confirmation*, which is a continuance of that Mission of the third Person of the holy Trinity in the first Christian Pentecost, (and therefore who endeavours to diminish Confirmation, slights that Mission:) To Priests, the rest of the Sacraments; except Baptisme, which (by reason of the peoples necessity)

sity) could not conveniently be reserv'd to Priests onely, whereof there were to be but few: But chiefly he gave them charge of the *Bloudlesse sacrifice of his own body*, and the *power of remitting sins*; whereon is principally grounded and subsists the reverence due to the Church of God: the one being a priviledge beyond mans invention; and such, as if all the great Wits that ever lived since the beginning of the world, should have studied, to raise, and magnifie some one state of men to the highest pitch of *Reverence* and *Eminencie* that could be imagin'd, they could never (without special light from heaven) have thought on any thing comparable to this; And yet so adapted to the secrets of nature, that who should dive into her mysteries would streight, at the first proposing, acknowledge it to be true, because a thing so hidden in the depth of natures bowels could not be invented and applyed in this manner, by any, but the Master of nature it self: The other being so mighty a power over our nature, and so extremely usefull for our direction and assistance in *Order* to eternal Blisse, that neither in respect of the awe it strikes into their subjects, nor of the profit, which (being conveniently used) results from it, there is nothing in this world any way estimable in comparison thereof.

What think you then, *Cousin*, who seeks to take away the real presence of Christs body in the B: *Sacrament*, and the power of *Absolving sins*, does he quarrel about trifles? Are not these points (which we hold as true and certaine, and on the same grounds, as the *Trinity* and *Incarnation*) of main consequence & importance? Dos not he shake the fundamental Basis, and chief cornerstone of the

the Churches building, who denys this power and authority to her *Judges* and *Ministers*, by which they were so reverenced and honored, that they were believed and obeyed? And finally, ought these questions to be left indifferent to every idle brain and private phansie, to think and practize what he pleases?

Nephew. I never penetrated thus far before; but truly now I see the Administration of the Sacraments are nececessary to improve the value and reputation of the Clergy (tho I acknowledg also their importance and usefulness to many other ends.) For if the Clergy be not in honour and esteem, they cannot produce the effect to which they were ordain'd; and if that effect miscarry, the Law of Christ cannot be observ'd; and if Christs Law be not kept, there's no salvation. Which clearly evinces this neglected truth, that the Clergy needs the greatest advantages, for the gaining of *credit* and *reverence* that can be confer'd on them. And certainly what Commonwealth soever highly esteems the Law of God and Christian Doctrine, would wish the Clergy these very priviledges, if they had them not already. Nor do I any longer wonder, that those who most oppose Ecclesiastical Hierarchy, most deeply hate and detest the doctrine of the B. Sacrament; thinking all *Popery* built on that great Sacrifice, as being the chief support of Sacerdotal Dignity: for I remember when I was in *France*, that *going to Mass* was held the principal distinctive signe betwixt a *Catholick* and a *Calvinist*. So that considering these supernatural, and never sufficiently honoured qualities of Priests, I easily believe the story of S. *Francis*, that he said, *If he should meet a* Priest *and*

an Angel, *he would first salute the Priest.*

Uncle. You say well, and surely were all Priests lives such as did not partly disgrace these gifts bestowed on them, I doubt not but (as Antiquity tels us has been often practised) Kings would lay their Crowns and Scepters at their feet, and wear their swords at their devotion; For we know those very Tribunals, and that temporal Power and Jurisdiction (concerning which the Clergy now, perhaps too much, contends with the Layty) were at first forced upon holy Bishops against their wils, either by the piety and agreement of particular persons, or the command of Emperours. The world then thinking him unworthy to live that would not condemn himself, if the Bishop judg'd against him: And both anciently in S. *Hugh* of *Lincoln*, and lately in S. *Charls* of *Milan*, the Christian world has seen how great a power the *Reverence* of a Bishop has, even in respect of Kings, when his life corresponds and seconds his Dignity.

Nephew. But do you conceive the greatest necessity of the Sacraments consists in *this*, that by the reserve of their administration to the Clergy, its authority might be more exalted and fitter to serve the Church? I have heard other reasons preferr'd before this, and methinks you should more insist upon that necessity, which in it self is the greatest and most efficacious, then on a lesser.

Uncle. I intend not *Cousin*, to alledge all the reasons why the Sacraments are necessary, but only some forcible one, to demonstrate the questions betwixt *Catholicks* and *Protestants*, concerning those points are really of great importance, and so fundamental, that Christian Religion cannot

not have its subsistance and progress without the knowledge of the truth in such Controversies. And certainly, if credit and authority be the only, or at least, the principal instrument by which the Preachers of Christianity can press and promote the doctrine they deliver; and that this credit and authority is incomparably more rais'd and strengthen'd by the Catholick *position*, then by the Protestant *negatives*; it clearly follows, that the efficacy of Christian Preachers, and strength of their cause is, without comparison, greater among Catholicks then Protestants, which cannot but strongly move any rational and considering minde that seriously believes our eternal good relies and depends on Christian Doctrine. *I* know there are other necessities of the Sacraments easily assignable: As for the unity of the Church, which (being dispers'd through the whole world) could not be otherwise conserv'd, then by the practise of som external actions common to them all, whereby they might know one another. As also for the augmentation of charity and grace by frequenting them. But these points have their proper Treatises and places belonging to them. It suffices I have shewn you, there ought to be persons appointed, whose *care*, *function*, and *imployment* is to teach and conserve in the people the truth of Christian Doctrine; and that, for this effect, they should be qualifi'd with some special priviledges above the common multitude, to authorize and give credit to their documents. For, though this Doctrine of its own nature, tend to the highest degree of perfection, and consequently of it self deserve to be infinitely esteemed and honour'd; yet, being supernatural, that is, far bove the innate capacity and reach of man, the

Teachers thereof must necessarily be endow'd with extraordinary power and authority to make the deeper impression on their Auditors. Which suppos'd, we may proceed farther, to the *third degree and condition* of removing impediments that hinder the prosecution of our eternal Good; and first enquire, whether

SECT. 6.

The resolutions of General Councels be sufficient to decide controversies of faith, both in Points of Necessity, and of Indifferency.

TEll me then, *Cousin*, is it lawful for a private man (to whose care the Church is not committed) to doubt in himself, and breed doubts in others, touching such points, as these Pastors of Christs flock (by their function and profession constituted Governours of the Church) are agreed on, and teach with common consent to the whole world?

Nephew. First, I see such an Innovator shall not easily induce others to believ him against so great an opposition, and therefore he had need of better grounds in such points then in others. Secondly, no wise person will oppose the opinion of so many authoriz'd and expert Masters, especially in a matter of their profession, without far clearer and more pregnant reasons then would be necessary, if he had not such strong prudential motives against him. But whether there be any obligation in conscience, or whether this be a matter of such importance as to make a fundamental

mental point of Religion, I know not. For contrariwise, methinks, there should be also an obligation in conscience, that when any private person (though alone, and without commission) findes these Governours mistaken, he should oppose them to the utmost of his power.

Uncle. You comprehend not fully my question, which is, Whether, because these have the charge and care to teach Gods law in the Church (setting aside all other difficulties) there arise an obligation in reason upon this precise ground, not easily to oppose their determination, without being certain and secure of very good footing? nor to attempt any thing against their verdict without evidence? Because, say I, to what purpose is their judgement, if it be as free to oppose them after, as before.

Nephew. As for *Obligation*, I told you, I know not any, but common sense and natural reason teaches us, that such as have the charge and care of instructing others, are suppos'd to have more understanding in the Doctrine they teach, then their own Schollars. And if any disputes arise, tis fitter the Teachers should be Judges, then those who learn of them: Whence I already discover this plain consequence, that in a question of Religion, to appeal from the Clergy (when a great and universal part of the wisest have given their consenting judgement) to the Layery, is as absurd, as to appeal from Masters to Schollars, or from men of one profession, in a matter concerning their particular art, to men of another.

Uncle. This is all I ask; for, where one part is absurd in reason, the other must be certain by the same reason: And what is absurd in practise, tis certain ought to be avoided. Wherefore, if I

miſtake not, your diſcourſ conclud's, that where-ever the queſtion is of skill, no man ought to appeal from them, who have the office of teaching, to thoſe who learn in matters of that art. And therefore, if thoſe who have the charge & care to teach Chriſtian doctrine, conſtantly & generaly agree in any point, after they have heard and conſider'd the oppoſitions made againſt it: neither can any, without abſurd malice, appeal to the laity, nor the layery without preſumptuous raſhneſs accept of ſuch appeal, to make themſelves Judges in a buſineſs of other mens profeſſions, wherein themſelves are ignorant, or at the moſt ſchollars. Since then in our caſe, there is no means to prevail againſt the Clergy (whom we ſuppoſe agreed amongſt themſelves) but by making the layery Judges of Religious Diſputes: It will always be clearly abſurd in reaſon, to attempt the introducing any new point or poſition againſt the Clergies common verdict and general conſent: and conſequently an obligation of reaſon and conſcience to acquieſce in their judgement.

Whence it follows that there's a power and authority in the Clergy, to determine unappealably all controverſies in Chriſtian doctrin (whereof they are the Teachers;) and a neceſſity in the layery (who are their ſchollers) of abſolute ſubmiſſion and obedience. For the nature of ſedition and faction is nothing elſe, but to remove the queſtion from them, who truly have, or by their places are ſuppoſed to have skill, to them who have, or may be preſum'd to have none; that is, from *Governors* to *ſubjects*, from the *skilful* to the *ignorant*, and from *natives* to *aliens*. Secondly, it follows, there can be but two caſes in which theſe determinations may be oppos'd.

For

For tis manifest, nothing but *evidence* of truth can justifie any innovation of this kinde; because where there's no perfect clearness, the case ought to be put to judgement; and supreme judgement being already given and known (as in our case) there is no farther place for judgment; and therefore only *evidence* can be heard. Now this *evidence* either is so great, that there needs no skill to conceive and understand it, and then the layety may be admitted Judges: Or else the *Eminence* of the *Introducer* is such, that a point may be *evident* to him, and not to the greatest Part of the Clergy, who are the natural Judges of this cause. One of which two extraordinary suppositions every *Innovator* must of necessity pretend. The first he cannot, without charging the whole Clergy with perverse and wilful opposition and contradiction of the known truth; and, so plainly known, that every man sees it at the first opening and proposing; which whether it was ever done, or is indeed possible, I leave to the judgement of any indifferent person. The second cannot any way belong to the ignorant and unskilful people; and therefore the *Innovator* must in such case seek out the most learned of the Clergy, and to them propose his reasons: but by no means publish his science to the vulgar ignorant (whom we suppose incapable of it) for fear of sedition and faction. In which case, as perhaps this point of Doctrine may be necessary, or at least convenient for the higher orders of the Clergy; so tis impossible it should be necessary for the common people, whose short understandings cannot reach up to it: So that this *eminent Introducer* must never make it common to the layery, much less appeal from the Clergy to them. And thus you

see all controversies in Religion must be remitted to the judgement of the Clergy; that is, in Catholick language, to an *œcumenical Council.*

Nephew. Methinks I could object one thing against your discourse; that 'tis not in mans liberty to deem or judge what he will of any position, such an act being a natural operation, and therefore no man ought to be fore'd to believe this or that. And to say truth, what can I think whether the great Turk be a tall or low man? whether the number of the stars be odd or even? if my life lay on't, I could not assent to either part.

Uncle. I, *Cousin*, but if the great Turks true statue were in *Westminster*, and for going thither you might know his height, or the true number of the stars set down in an Almanack which you might buy for a groat, I believe, if your life lay on't, you would easily be resolv'd to think the truth.

Nephew. True: but then I were not forc'd to adhere to one part, but only to seek out the truth and so come naturally to receive it.

Uncle. Then, if the Church command you to believe *that*, which, by seeking, you may easily come to know; not She, but you are to blame if you believe not what She commands: And if her authority be stronger, then any argument which can be brought to the contrary, and more certain then most part of the reasons on which you build all the beliefs that govern your life and actions, may you not securely assent to what She believes? Or if you please, seek but out the motives which makes the Church it self believe what it teaches, and you will easily finde a most plentiful satisfaction,

faction. But if you will not attend the means of arriving to know the truth, is it not fitting you should be forc'd to your own good, as fools and mad men are whipt into reason? Some are constrain'd by a happy violence to pious and vertuous actions, which, if left to themselves, they would never have thought on: and as dogs abstain from faults for fear of beating, so their passions are often reclaim'd to duty for fear of punishment.

Nephew. 'Tis true, a passionate man never sees reason: and yet thinks all others unreasonable, his passion still blinding his judgement; and therefore truly I cannot answer why we should not be punish'd for our passions, and so forc'd to leave them.

Uncle. If that be so, *Cousin*, you will finde your argument has a greater extent then you are aware of. For if you consider how few their number is, that are not carried away with passion, or interest, and how secretly these dispositions lie hid in the mindes and actions, even of the best, and then look into the nature of our souls, that nothing but *evidence* can of it self, or by its own force, strongly move and draw them to assent: you will plainly perceive *all opinion* is generally grounded on passion and interest; and so, according to your argument, all false opinions should be corrected.

Nephew. There seems to my eye a great difference, betwixt disputing wildly to and fro with arguments on both sides, according to the common use; and taking known agreed Principles, and proceeding on them to draw out a long thred of science, as methinks your manner is. For I conceive if this method were strickly ob-

serv'd,

observ'd, we might easily attain to farre more knowledg in things necessary to our *Well-being*, and to a greater eminence in profitable curiosities.

Uncle. However, *Cousin*, I hope you now perceive this point has resolv'd all controversies. For if all disputes betwixt us and others of a different communion, be *in matters subject to judgement*; and there can be no higher judgment on earth, for the resolution of such difficulties, then a General Councel; and that we refuse not communion to any, but for matters thus resolv'd; it evidently follows, all questions betwixt us and what Church soever of different communion, are already past judgement, and consequently past dispute: And what opinion can you have of those, who will not be content with any judgement God hath left on earth for such Doctrines, as themselves are pleas'd to call in doubt? Certainly, both common sense, and natural reason clearly condemns them.

But let me ask you one question farther. Suppose some thing be order'd in the Church according to the judgement and discretion of *those*, to whom God has given the power of *Government* and *Judgement* in such matters; which perhaps of it self might be otherwise setled, without any prejudice to the Church, but *they* thought this way the fittest: now come others, to whom this charge is not committed, and say tis decreed amiss, requiring it may be alter'd; whether in this case, such *order* ought to be chang'd, upon their demand and proposition?

Neph. If those Controulers can shew an errour in the *order*, then I conceiv it fitting to be changd; otherwise I shou'd absolutely condemn them of disobedience

disobedience and schism, if they persever'd and stood out in their obstinacy. And he that should excuse them, were to be suspected as seditious, and true to no authority, however he profess to acknowledge it.

Uncle. Softly, *Cousin*, nothing more frequent, then through passion and oversight to forsake our own principles, and contradict in one case, what our selves confess in another. For, though it be true, by consequence of argument, that who rises against the Church in this kinde, may on the same ground and principle, be false to any other authority or government; yet, on other reasons, or by not seeing the consequence of his fact, he may be true and faithful; and therefore it were rashness to condemn, for this reason alone, those truths which such an one may perhaps maintain in other matters: However, is not our conclusion manifest, that there's no place for *If's* and *And's*, in our case, where there can be no evidence brought against a point of Doctrine, which the highest *Tribunal* and *Judgement* on earth has already decreed?

But suppose some one or few of these *Innovators* had *Evidence* on their side; yet the vulgar people, whom they put on to mutiny, cannot have it, no nor any certainty that these their ring-leaders have *Evidence*, being not able to compare understandingly the worth and preferrableness of single Persons contending in a business which surpasses their capacity: and therefore the common people, in such a case, must needs proceed and act, whatever they attempt, upon passion, surprize or interest; and consequently, those *Innovators*, who solicite and press them into such factious tumults, cannot be excused from the guilt

of

of temerity, obstinacy, and Arch-Rebellion. Yet as a Prince sometimes condescends to his revolted subjects; that he may gain time, and by sweetness bring them to reason: So I doubt not but the Church both may and will upon prudent considerations, relent sometimes a little, to establish her Government and good order more strongly afterwards. Nor is she to be reprehended, if contrariwise she be rigorous, in just and necessary occasions, when she sees that yielding weakens her authority, and rather increases then assuages the mutiny: But what is now and then convenient to be done, belongs to them who are in place to judge; and for us to obey, and still suppose they do the best.

Nephew. Hitherto I am well satisfied; but there is a main difficulty yet untoucht about the diversity of the *rule of faith*, I pray tell me, is not

Sect. 7.

The maintenance of the unity of the Church extreamly necessary.

FOr we profess, you know, *Tradition*, or the *receipt* of our Doctrine *from father to son*, is our chief authority, and prime motive of faith; whereas all Sects, divided from us, acknowledg no other rule, then their own interpretation of Scripture. This, in my minde, is the most important question of all the controversies in Religion; and [on the] resolution of this point depend all other disputes and difficulties of Christian faith; nay, even our being truly and properly

properly Christians or faithful. For if Christ was a Law maker, not every one who professes his name, but who observes his Law is truly a Christian. And if Christ has set down a certain *rule*, and established certain *Magistrates* to guide us to the knowledge of this law; whoever follows not that *rule*, nor receives those *Magistrates*, cannot be said to fulfil his Law, but vainly and injuriously professes Christs name without the least title to so honourable a character.

Uncle. You think Cousin every one that performs not Christs Law is no christian, what then shall become of sinners? shall none of them be christians? you will make a Church of only Elect, or Predestinate, as the Puritans do. Doe

Nephew. It may be I go too far, yet certainly who does not keep Christs law, or profess to keep it, is no Christian. But then methinks I pass too far on the other side, for all those that profess Christs name, profess also to keep his law, how little soever they remember their words in their lives and conversations.

Uncle. Then Cousin I will help you out, and open the state of the question to you. First, you must know that this word (*Ecclesia*) in its primitive sense signifies a meeting or congregation of men called out of a greater multitude, as a Councel or Senate is. And because the first christians were called in that manner by Christ and his Apostles, *Ego vos elegi de mundo*, we properly and deservedly entitle the multitude of christians by this name, *a Church*. Now a multitude *called together*, is not only and simply a multitude, (which may import confusion) but a multitude gathered and united. If you ask wherein this congregation we speak of, is united? it is to perform the will

will of the Caller; who being *Iesus*, (that is, *Saviour* or *Director* to salvation) their calling must be to walk in the paths of salvation: And since we have no other Master of our salvation but *Jesus Christ*, 'tis evident the unitie of his Church must consist in observance of his law. Secondly, you are to note two sorts of unities, one of similitude, the other of connexion. We say all men are of one nature, that's an unitie of similitude; we say likewise, all the parts of a man (though dislike in themselves) make one man, there's an unitie of connexion. Now if the Church of Christ had been to continue only for his own or his Apostles time, the former unitie would have served. Nay, even now, if all the christians who live at this day *perform* the same things, practise the same faith and good life, and use the same Sacraments; This *unity* of similitude would suffice to make the Church of Christ *one* for the present; but could not make it subsist and continue, there being no connexion among the parts & members of this multitude to make them stick together. Wherfore Christ having planted a multitude of faithful, which he intended should subsist and endure for many ages, no doubt but he has given them such an unity as is necessary for their preservation and continuance

Thirdly, You must know there are two kinds of multitudes, which subsist and continue; one natural, as the parts of a living creature; the other moral, as the members of communities or commonwealths, and both have their proportional unities. For the first we see in Plants, all the members have a due connexion to the root, from which being cut off the part dies for want of continuitie. In other living creatures we find a heart (or some other thing that supplies its function) by

by connexion whereunto every part receives life and subsistence, and whose passage or communication with that heart being stopt and obstructed, the part by little and little fades away and dies. For the second subsisting and continuing multitude, we seeing in all communities there's still a *Head, Commoncouncel,* or *highest Authority,* to which all the members repair in necessitie; and by their connexion with it, receive *security, life,* and *motion* in that moral kind of being, every one doing his duty according to the laws of that communitie: the *Head* or *Supreme Authority* providing for the observance of the laws in general, and particularly for the direction of such cases as the laws reach not to: and if you take away this *Head* or *common wisdom,* the multitude must of necessity be short-liv'd, and quickly come to ruine. Hence it is evident to common sense and natural reason, that the Church of Christ being a multitude ordained to subsist and continue, must not only have the *unity of similitude,* and be *one* by the likeness of actions, which Christ has prescrib'd, & all christians practise; but also by the unity of connexion to som common *Head and supreme Councel,* whereby it may conserve it self in the continuance of the law of Christ, & keep its subjects in the practice of those actions which he has commanded. And here I shal offer you a very important reflection, That were this law natural, there needed no more, to be of the Church, then to be a member of this communitie; & he would be out of it, who should not participate of the two unities: but our christian law being above nature, and consequently not to be learned by mans judgment, but by authority, (that is, by receiving it from Christ) those who receive it not by that means and rule by which

see

which Christ hath ordained it shall be delivered, are not truly of this communitie, whatever be their material belief and opinion. Wherefore you are to consider farther, that Christ may have ordained the receit of his law to be effected two wayes: Either by word of mouth, that it should be vocally taught and delivered from hand to hand, from father to son to the worlds end: or *by writing*. Now if Christ have commanded both these wayes, he that refuses either, is not (in a precise and rigorous sense) a Christian. If he have instituted *Tradition* alone to be the means and rule of the receit of his doctrine, and given *Scripture* only for superabundant instruction and consolation; then who rejects *Tradition*, and flies to *Scripture*, making it his only *rule* and *means* of *receiving* Christs law, is not truly and properly a christian. Lastly, If Christ have ordained *Scripture* to be the sole *rule* and *means*, then who cleaves to *Tradition* is not (in exact and proper speech) of the Christian communitie.

Now the resolution of this question belongs to the Governors of the Church, who, if they have the true Rule, their subjects are safe; if not, their subjects souls will be required at their hands, by whom they perish. But *I* will take another time to give you full satisfaction in this principal difficultie. In the interim you may inferr out of this discourse to our present purpose, that *three things* are required to make a legitimate Christian, and such as every one ought to be, if he will be truly a member of the communitie and church of Christ. (Though, perhaps, one may be in some sort a christian, and go to heaven too, by an extraordinary means, without having all these three subsequent dispositions and qualities.) The first

is,

is, that he believe and practice the law of Christ, which in respect of a particular person is but short, and 'tis, in a word, *to love God above all things*. The second, that he be united to the multitude of true christians, and depend on the Government left and instituted by Christ here on earth. And for this point or qualitie, as I doubt not but some one or few may be saved without it (nay peradventure with an opposition to it in fact through ignorance, so his heart be true and without passion; yet to think this a common, ordinary, and high way to salvation, or that 'tis as indifferent to live out of this Government setled by Christ, as under it, were ridiculous in common sense and reason; and indeed absolutely disanuls Christs comming, and makes his law void and fruitles. If you desire to conceive the necessitie of this point more fully, do but consider the nature of all civil and political Common-wealths; where if any live not under the Governours, and depend on the Magistrates established by the highest power, he cannot be truly and properly called a member of that community; nor assuredly know (ordinarily speaking) nor constantly perform the laws and orders of it.

The third condition is, that this community (whereof every particular christian ought to be a share and member) have the true *rule* and *means* to know and fulfil the law of Christ. Which point is more necessary to be exactly searcht into by those who live amongst diversitie of opinions concerning it. For when there appears learned and morally good men on both sides, a private person seems to have just reason of doubting which he shall take for his guide; and therefore this point well discussed among such, gives a

full

full and general satisfaction for the whole belief & practice. And these two last qualifications clear one the other; for that communitie which has the true means of the receit of Christs doctrine, that is, has the *true rule of faith*, must infallibly be it, where we are to seek, and shall find the christian law: And contrariwise, if we find the true communitie, we are sure it has the true *rule* of knowing Christs law and doctrine.

Hence it is that the Catholick Church alwayes press'd her adversaries with two special Arguments: 1 The *novelty* of their Church, shewing none of them ever had a continual visible succession. 2 That they receive not their opinions from their Ancestors, & by them from Christ; but they were invented *at such a time*, against the received *tenet* of the Church of that Age: which imports Tradition for the Church, and noveltie of doctrine in her Adversaries. And now I hope you see the resolution of our first question.

Nephew. I think I do, & 'tis (if I be not deceiv'd) that such as profess to keep the law of Christ (though in effect they fail to perform it) are to be accounted of the Church; and consequently sinners not to be excluded, so long as they submit to the Churches Government establish'd by Christ: And on the other side, though divers pretend to Christs law and doctrine, yet unless they be joined and united to that communitie, which has *this government*, and *the true rule* to know & continue Christs law, they cannot (generally speaking) be saved. But you said one thing troubles me, that some may be saved even without these conditions; which is against our common perswasion, that there's *no salvation out of the Church of God*; and therefore we labour to get people reconciled

ciled and united to the Church, even in the hour of death; which would not be so needfull, if salvation could be had out of the Church.

Uncle. Why, *Cousin*, do you not say every one has two legs, two eyes, and the like, though some particular Person be destitute of both? we say none can subsist without meat, yet some are recorded to have passed many years without it. We say 'tis impossible to live in the water, yet 'tis written, that the Portugals in their discoveries found a man whose habitation was in the sea, and came only to land, as Crocodiles & seacalves, do.

Thus you see we put universal denominations on the common and general; and that without prejudice to lawful exceptions of rarities or prodigies. Ther's no generall rule but has an exception; and Logicians say, *Ars non curat de accidentibus ac fortuitis*.

Nephew. But, I beseech you, shew me, why 'tis a rare accident to be saved out of the Church. If we look into the *tenets* of our Protestants, why may they not be said to hold sufficient points of faith, both for attaining the love of God, which is the chief path to salvation, & also to live an ordinary competent good life amongst their neighbours, which is the compleatnesse of God's Law.

Uncle. Where not man a civil and sociall animal, that is, to live with others, I should not deny, but a Protestant might more ordinarily be sav'd; for, as you said wel, they hold as many *tenets* with the Catholike Church, as are in some sort sufficient for the direction of a private mans life: But God has commanded every one to have care of his neighbour, at least so far, as not to deprive him of things necessary to his salvation; And many things being needful to a multitude, that are not to every

were

every private person, he that hinders the multitude from such necessary means and assistance, can never be saved himself. As if some Province or part of a Commonwealth should start up and refuse divers ancient Laws necessary for the good and peaceable living of the whole body; perhaps some private persons after this division might so live and behave themselves, as to correspond and comply with the end and intention of the whole Common-wealth, in vertue of such laws and statutes as might be universally admitted or retained by them all: but surely the multitude and generalitie of this Province would never reach to that perfection, wanting (as we suppose) several laws and institutions in common, necessary for them. Now that the Catholike *tenets* which Protestants refuse and contradict, are of this nature, Necessary for the multitude, is evident: As Government of the whole Church, and those laws and canons which these Governours universally assembled enact for the good of the common multitude: as in particular, praying to Saints and for the dead; the use of pictures, sacraments, ceremonies, and the like, which Christ or his Apostles, or their successors instituted for the benefit of the universal communitie of christians. Amongst whom there being divers tastes, one is pleased with one thing, another with something else. Wherefore Protestants in contradicting these points (supposing them profitable and necessary, as *I* shall demonstrate presently) against the great rule of charity, hinder the common people of salvation; and therefore we pronounce generally that themselves cannot be saved; though we exclude not absolutely every particular person, who through ignorance may (for any thing

thing I know) be excused from the guilt of Protestancie.

Nephew. I am heartily glad to hear you say some may be excused; for I shall entertain better hopes of some of my deceased friends, then hitherto I have. But since you are falu into this discourse, pray let me understand why Protestants censure us of uncharitableness, when we say, They shall be damned, unless excused by ignorance? For sure themselves must needs say as much of us, since they accuse us of *Idolatrie*, and other hainous crimes; and consequently, they must be as uncharitable as we, or else unavoidably run into a manifest contradiction.

Uncle. The mixture of *Protestants* and *Puritans* in one Commonwealth, must of necessitie draw many into error, who cannot distinguish one from the other, nor whither a Doctrine urged be Protestancie or Puritanism. For this very blaming of our uncharitableness (which *I* think is as old as Protestancie it self) shews that true Protestants have ever been of this opinion, that the disputes betwixt Catholikes and them, were but matters of indifferencie. *I* remember when *I* was a boy, there dyed a vertuous *Catholike* a *Kinsman* of mine, and at the same time died a moral honest *Protestant*; and the country said they were both gone to heaven, but the one by *Rome* and the other by *Geneva*, and so the Papist had the longer journey. And the imputation which the people generally laid on Catholikes was that they oppressed men with too great and unnecessary burdens, and forced them to their opinions. Which cannot be otherwise according to the grounds of Protestants, for we *have* all they retain and more; and in particular, we refuse nothing that

that can be proved by Scripture, which is the main principle of Protestanisme, the Bible being the only rule and foundation of their belief; and we damne, as well as they, who ever will not believe all that's evident in the Scripture, onely we adhere to what our Forefathers have taught us, according to the principles of nature, & common sense, according to the examples of all the Laws and Nations of the world, till the contrary be clear'd against us. Wherefore *Protestants*, if closely followed, must either say in their heat, that *Catholicks* can give no probable or apparent answer to those places of Scripture they bring against them (which must be either an ignorant or mad mans speech) or else that the questions disputed betwixt them and us are of indifferency and not necessity. So that I believe, those who say they ought, and may, censure us as freely as we them, smell of *Puritanisme*, leaving the *Protestants* in the main point: neither is this to answer, but to acknowledge in their own hearts that want of charity which true *Protestants* object against us; and so condemne themselves. But we *Catholikes* censures *Protestants*, first, because they refuse *that*, which we hold to be *the true rule of Faith*, the Churches authority, or *tradition*: and since the rule of Faith runs through the whole course of our belief, and is the Tenor and principle on which we hold every particular Article, it is evident who refuses to accept this true rule of attaining to the knowledge of Christian Faith, cannot believe aright, nor have true faith, but by chance; and so will misse it for the most part. Secondly, *this rule of ours* tells us, *Protestants* negative positions are against the general good of the multitude of Christians, and consequently, against charity and Gods law;

law; hindering them from divers important and necessary means conducing to their salvation. Lastly, it were meer folly to leave possession upon a slight argument; for, as in *Equity* the better proof, should carry the cause, the equal devide it; so, where long, and quiet possession is on the one side, nothing but such clear conviction as the nature of the cause will bear, ought to *gaine* possession; otherwise, no humane Title could ever be stable and constant. Now *Catholikes* are as certain of these two points, as that they live and breath, *viz:* That *they have possession*; &, *no evident conviction has ever been hitherto produced against them.* Wherefore, I see not why a *Protestant* should be offended, that the *Catholiks* censure all their Adversaries in generall so severely; since it is manifest, if they should do otherwise, they would not onely betray their own principles, but deny their brethren that fraternall rebuke and admonition, which the law of God & good neighbourhood requires at the hands of men so perswaded, as these grounds force and oblige us to be.

Nephew. Surely then this is the reason why the Church now and then chastises such subjects as rebel in belief against her; which *Protestants* so exclaim at.

Uncle. It is so indeed; &, being no other Church can have this principle against us, if at any time they persecute us for our faith & belief, they must needs do it more out of passion and revenge, then any rational love and knowing zeal to God & Religion. And now, I hope you conceive the great importance of these points we have so long discoursed on, being indeed such as the Church of God cannot subsist without them. Now you see, how essential to Christs coming, and necessary to mans salva-

salvation, it was to establish *some* in the charge and care of teaching and governing the Church; Those Teachers and Governors to be adorned with great credit and authoritie, even supernatural, that their words and commands may the more easily find belief and obedience; Their decrees in matters of Faith and Religion to be unappealably received, and not subjected to the weak and wavering judgment of the Laitie, who are generally ignorant in the principles of their science and discipline. Lastly, that being thus united they have the true Rule of knowing Christs law, and all those heavenly, either Doctrines to be believed, or precepts to be practised: which you see are of so high importance, that the very essence of a christian Church cannot subsist without them: And without such a Church the generalitie of mankind cannot be maintained in charitie: Nor without charitie, arrive to eternal happiness, for which both charitie and all these other points are absolutely necessary. This has been the chain of our discourse hitherto, if you have well understood and conceived my intention: which you see, I have pursu'd by the light of common sense and reason, according to my promise. And, since you would have me go this way, neither flying up to sublime Metaphysicks, nor drowning your memory with tedious allegations of Authors; We will still continue the same path, insisting in the principles of Nature, and shewing that divers points of our faith and practice (which *Protestants* deny) are, even by their conformity to naturall Reason, and by their own proper force and efficacy, in order to the producing good and vertuous effects in a Christian communitie; and thereby contributing to

salvation

salvation, are, I say, of no small consequence and importance. First, then, tell me, whether you think there be not another degree of necessity, though of an inferior kind in it self, yet sufficient to make a point of such concernment, that it would be a lawfull and just cause to refuse communion to the refractory and obstinate oppoſers thereof? And let us put the question thus,

Sect. 8.

Whether some points may not be of necessity in a lower degree, as particularly the use of Pictures or Images?

Ephew. I told you before how I thought *necessity* might be distinguish'd into an Absolute Necessity, and into a High *Conveniency*; and you lik'd it well. But, 'me thinks it were a hard case to deprive any of that means, without which he cannot absolutely attain his end; that others may come to their ends with greater ease and security. And therefore I should conceive no other then an absolute necessity sufficient to deserve Excommunication; which I take to be a depriving of that quality, without which eternall Bliſſe can never be obtained.

Uncle. Suppose *Cousin*, that in a community of a hundred thousand, ninety thousand would never come to Heaven (though absolutly, they could) unleſſe the way were made easie; do you believe it; fit or tolerable, in any one, or a dousen, to take away the means by which the way might be facilitated to the rest? Nay if ten thousand of the hundred thousand would arrive to happineſſe with great pains and labours; were it not better in the Governors

eye, (who ought to be a common father to all) to let the tenth part perish, then all the other nine?

Nephew. I confesse my oversight; for truly the Church is bound, in such a case, to proceed with rigor; And they, who will not condescend to help the frailty of their brethren, deserve by this very fact to lose the protection of charity, which they wilfully abandon: And in effect, such a party has already put it self out of the secret communion of Gods Church; and the Governor is onely to perform it in externall apparence.

Uncle. Add to this, that such perverse spirits wilfully stand out, thorow pride and faction, to justifie their opinion; And, that they trench upon the Government ordained by *Jesus Christ*, proudly setting themselves in the seat of judgement without any lawfull calling, to determine whats fit and convenient for the whole Christian community, and strugling to force their opinions on the Church, directly against the sentence of their Governors. Look but into the examples of any political Common-wealth, and see what inequality there is betwixt twelve pence and a mans life; yet our laws ordain the losse of life for the stealth of a shilling or thereabouts; not considering the value of the thing stoln, but that such a fact is the breach of publick justice; which, if permitted, no man should be Master of his own. This then supposed, I doubt not, you wil grant, that, in a Church, *vertue* is to be engendred and conserved with great care and diligence; And, though the same things which first breed piety and devotion do afterwards conserve it, yet some there may be more proper for nourishing, then be-

begetting; and again others more fit to begin then encreaſe it; according as the different ſtate of any thing that grows towards perfection requires a diverſe care and attendance. Tell me then, *Couſin*, how is the breeding of vertue performed in mankind? I mean not the firſt breeding which is done by inſtruction; but the flouriſhing, increaſe, and bringing it to ſtrength?

Nephew. Since vertue is nothing but the love of what is truly good for man, and that we cannot love what we know not; *vertue* muſt needs be chiefly increaſed by clearly ſeeing, and often thinking on the *thing* we ought to love, and of ſuch conſiderations as relate to it, and make it appear worthy of love: amongſt which one is, that it be in our power to obtain. Whence *I* infer the breeding of vertue conſiſts in three points, *Often thinking of its object, highly eſteeming it*, and *conceiting it poſſible*. Which correſpond to the three ſteps and degrees, you made, of tending to any good. And if theſe three be well obſerved by any ſocietie, *vertue* muſt neceſſarily encreaſe and flouriſh in that communitie.

Uncle. I am glad you make ſuch good uſe of what I ſay. Now *Couſin*, if the diſputes and [differences in particular poſitions] betwixt us and Proteſtants, concern all theſe three points, and that highly; will you not confeſs they are of great importance? For the firſt you have heard I am ſure, how God Almightie, in the times of the ancient Prophets would have the hearts of his choſen people perpetually buſied about his law; how he enjoyned them to think of it at home and on the way, morning and evening; how carefully he provided, his commandments ſhould be bound to their hands, and written on

the frontispiece of their houses: All which was to signifie that the memorie of Gods law could not be too frequent, nor that it sufficed to think on't in the Church only, or at vacant times; but our thoughts ought every moment be employed therein continually. The same care and punctual diligence uses the Catholick Church; causing to be erected in the high ways, in market-places, and corners of streets, sometimes crosses with our Saviours Image nail'd on them, sometimes his Flagellation, his Coronation, his Resurrection, his Ascention, or other mysterie of our Redemption, being all intended as pious representations, to put us in mind of what ought to move us to the love of God: as is frequently to be seen in Catholike Countries, in every house, in every room, over every dore; of which there remain yet some marks even in our own divided Island. And can you think these holy endeavors of our Forefathers compared to these commands of Almighty God in the Old Law, too great a diligence? or that the zeal of those who pul'd down these memorials of christianitie, was according to science? Does not the question of this point clearly concern the increase of vertue, and the Churches government? Certainly, no wise and indifferent person can doubt, but that pictures must needs breed many good thoughts which would never have been without them. What true christian can look on the representation of any bloody passage of our Saviors sufferings, but will be moved to some good sentiment, if he have any feeling of christianity in his heart? Or if some be not moved to devotion by such objects; will not many others be? Now from these devout thoughts naturally proceed many vertuous affections; and from these affections charity, and from charity salvation: So

that you see some attain to salvation, others to a higher degree of perfection, and consequently of bliss, by the use of pictures. And if pictures have this operation in our souls; to what degree of reverence and affection will the blessed Sacrament raise them, who truly and assuredly believe Christs real, corporal, and substantial presence continually in their Churches, and on their Altars? And what a motive of love do *they* take from christian Religion, who deny this point?

Nephew. You speak with reason and common sense in my judgment. And indeed, the price of one soul is more worth then any temporal good, even of the whole world; which (besides the pregnant reasons I have heard you give) our Saviour himself testifies in expres and plain words, *Mat.* 16. Nevertheless, *Uncle*, 'tis the course of the world not to esteem a small part of a great number, but to look only on the greatest part: whether it be the shortness of our discourse in Government, not able to reach every particular, or the mutabilitie of nature, not suffering it self to be bound to one strain (though the best and perfectest) which causes this our unhappiness, I know not: but so 'tis, a small number is not regarded. Which I speak to this purpose, that one might answer your discourse in a word, and say, The good which the use of pictures brings, is so small and little, that it is not worthy looking after; and therefore may well be neglected without any great loss.

Uncle. Few words, *Cousin*, may raise a great difficultie: and the rather in this question, because the use of Images has two conditions, one that it works by little and little, and so the present effect is almost still imperceptible; the other

that it is never the immediate nor sole cause of its effect, but has always some other cause joyn'd with it, which may produce the same effect without it. These two conditions make it hard to demonstrate the efficacy of this cause; seeing we can neither proceed by shewing the want of the effect, this cause being substracted, nor by the change of the effect, when this is put. Nevertheless, to give you some light & content in this point; Do you remember the *Turner* whom I was wont to imploy in *London*, how by taking away little shavings, so small and thin that you might see through them, he would in a quarter of an hour, bring a great and rough stick to be as slender and smooth as he desired; which suppose he had been three days a doing, and perpetually turning; yet by reason of the matter or quality of the work, he might be said perhaps to have wrought well, though the effect of every particular stroke did not appear.

Nephew. I conceive your meaning already, That as those shavings would be, as it were, invisible, and a looker on (not seeing where the chips were heap'd together; for there I doubt not they might easily be seen) would think the workman only pres'd and smooth'd his timber, without the least suspition of lessening it: So, I imagine you will tell me, the pious affections gain'd by the use of pictures, produce at length a great effect in our souls, though it be undiscernable in every particular action; and consequently, the time imploy'd therein no less profitable for our end, then the *Turners* for his.

Uncle. You are in the right, onely I will tell you, *Aristotle* say's, Poesie is a painting in words; and tho I intend not to compare the influence

of

of a Picture to that of Poesy, yet if you had experience what strong and vehement affections are produced and imprinted in the minds of the people in some countries, by meer dumb shews and representations, without all life and action, as well as you know the force of our Plays in *London*; you would say there's more truth in *Aristotles* words then every one conceives; and that the effect of Pictures and Poetry is so neer the same, that justly they may be compared, as a slow unready *Turner*, to a quick and nimble one. The impression deriv'd from Pictures being often very considerable, though their operation be sometimes scarce observable.

Nephew. You have said so much, that now I have a scruple on the the contrary side; and rather fear the use of Pictures ought to be abolisht, lest they work too much, and induce the ignorant to Idolatry, by conceiving the very materiall Images to have some hidden vertue in them. So I have heard the Emperour of *Constantinople* caused *Statues* to be taken out of Churches, because some Priests abused them by counterfeiting miracles: And I am told, in some Catholick countries the people will not suffer old Pictures to be changed into new; Nay, that even our Divines attribute I know not what particular assistance of God to one Picture rather then another. And lastly, that certain simple souls, being asked, have professed that a *Crucifix* was *Christ*, others have spoken to Pictures, as to living things, and the like.

Uncle. And I have heard, that a poor woman examined on her death-bed about the three Persons of the B. Trinity, said the *Son* was this great light which brings us day, nor could she

be taken off, having been long deceived by the equivocation of ſound betwixt *Son* and *Sun*; think you therefore, Couſin, it were fit to take away the preaching of the B. Trinity for ſuch errors? I know you do not. In ſuch queſtions we muſt balance the good of the inſtitution, with the capacity and likelihood of errror and prejudice which may happen by miſchance: for every diſcreet eye ſees that our nature is ſubject to do it ſelf miſchief even by the beſt things. How dull and blockiſh, how nothing better then the ſtock or ſtone he admires, muſt that man be (if he have had but any indifferent inſtruction in Chriſtianity) who can believe a piece of Wood or Marble is that *God and Man*, whom he hath ſo often heard preached to be born of a Virgin, to have lived ſo many years, to have died upon a Croſs, and now to reign in heaven for ever? Certainly it is evident to any wiſe and moderate perſon, the fault is not in the doctrine, but in the want of inſtruction, & conſequently, *that* were to be mended, not the uſe of Pictures taken away, which univerſally advance piety and vertue, though ſome particular harms may come by their occaſion from another cauſe. And the Greek Emperour had done more wiſely to have puniſhed with ſeverity thoſe Impoſtors, then taken away ſuch an inſtrument of Devotion. Which anſwer may be applied with convenient proportion to thoſe who are ſo zealous towards their old Pictures. For Divines opinions, I intend not to bind controverſies of Religion to their *Quares*, nor mingle them in our diſcourſe: the more common this fault is, the more is it to be avoided. Onely I will add, If any tell you, The frequent uſe of Pictures makes them of little or no effect:

effect. Your reply is ready, that the same objection may be made against those common and continually present means God Almighty ordained in the old Law, to renew and enforce the perpetual memory of his benefits and commandments; as also against any other way how efficacious soever, as preaching, prayer, frequentation of the Sacraments, and the like, if they be commonly used and practized. But to go on in our discourse, what shall we say, *Cousin*, of

SECT. 9.

The honoring of Saints, their Canonization, and the institution of Religious Orders; are they necessary in this same degree?

WHich that we may discover the better, let us consider the other two parts and conditions you told me, were necessity for the breeding of vertue, *Esteeming it, and seeing it to be possible.* And pray, what instrument can be found to make a deeper impression of esteem, then the veneration we give to Saints? For they being the men who have footed out those steps we must tread, if we intend to come to their rewards, and attain that happiness where they are arrived (which is the greatest motive of our vertuous living) can we doubt but the higher conceit we make of the excellency of their state, the greater and more ardent must our desire be, and the stronger our courage to undertake and practice what they undertook and performed. The nobler value Souldiers make of the quality of a Commander, the more ready they are to

enter on those actions by which such honors are to be obtained: And the same reason exactly holds in all conditions of the world. Now, if you consider wherein consists the honor we give to Saints, you shall find it is chiefly in three points. 1. In keeping their holy days. 2. Reverencing their Reliques and Pictures. 3. In hoping good from them, by praying to them. For we naturally imagine the greatest excellency in those, whose persons deserve honor, and whose bounty can oblige all the world, never fixing any high conceit where we neither expect good from them, nor believe honor due to them.

Nephew. I cannot but interrupt your discourse with admiration to see how men (who surely had not cast away all thoughts of vertue, since they gain'd so many followers, and were in such vogue and credit) should, under slight pretences, so weaken the main strings by which the poor common people were drawn to heaven; and that for a little vanity, and desire to appear more learned or more pure then others. How true is it, *Uncle*, that man hath no foe but himself? For not all the Tortures and Tyrannies, not all the inundations of waters, & ragings of fires that can be imagin'd could ever have done so much harm to mankind; as the very taking away that esteem and conceit we *Catholicks* have of the excellency and greatness of Saints, and the happy estate they enjoy, the end and principal mark we all should aym at.

Uncle. Oh! *Cozen*, if *Alexander*, *Cesar*, or any of your great glory-hunters had consider'd in their life (what now peradventure to their excessive grief they cannot be ignorant of) the difference, even in this worldly and vain glory, betwixt

Peter

Peter the fisherman, or *Paul* the tentmaker (who never aim'd at this honour, but thought it worse then the dust they shaked from their shooes) and themselves, who pursued it so keenly, with perpetual danger of their lives; wasting their estates and Countries, and ruining their neighbours: if, I say, they had then known this difference, would they not have changed their minds, and followed other courses? Do they not now for ever torment themselves, and tear their very souls in pieces, to see their owne folly, and their no less witless then graceless ambition? And can you then deny, that the holy Church uses in this, a most efficacious means to bring us to a vertuous life, so strongly recommending to us by this doctrine of honoring and praying to Saints, the glory and bliss, after which we ought all to thirst and hope, if we be true Christians?

Nephew. As to the two first points, I confess you have reason; but the third I fear you will not come off so well with: For, the easier it is to obtain any good, the more we account it ours, and have the greater encouragement to endeavour it: now what can be imagined more easie then to make a conceit of Christ's infinite goodness, and perswade our selves, without any pains or deserts on our side, he will give us the great reward according to his owne pleasure purely and onely out of his mercy, without any respect to our works or lives in this world? whereas we *Catholicks* make the gates of heaven so narrow, and the way thither so rugged, that we seem to deter men from vertue, by representing the path so thorny and difficult that leads to it.

Uncle. If either we or they could so much

as

as fancy to come to bliss without good life, I should not wonder at your proposition; for then the best and onely course were to have a great confidence in him whose guift it is: But if Christ has neither left any such way, nor any understanding man ever believ'd, that faith, with a wicked careless life, will bring us to heaven: can you think such an exaggeration of faith and confidence, & such disesteem of good works, a proper means to perswade and excite us to mortification and perseverance in vertuous action; which, by all our confessions are requisite to salvation? Surely the Catholike Church takes the securer course; because works in the way of merit, (that is, done for Gods sake, and with hope of heaven) cannot be without faith, but how easie it is to perswade our selves we have much faith without working, is found by daily experience. Hence it is the Catholike Church, with designe to move and perswade us to labour for our eternall happiness, proposes the examples of men made of flesh and blood as we are, who have finisht this great conquest in the most grave and solemn act of canonization of Saints. And also of persons yet here among us, who by their extraordinary lives make it appear the way to heaven is not so hard, but many daily tread the paths of it. I mean Religious professions, where all sorts of austerities are daily practised before our eyes, not to be derided and scorn'd, as too often they are by insolent and prophane spirits. For, what power the examples and conversation of good men have, every wise observer knows. We see all the dangers of the Sea and Wars, even voluntary diving to the bottom of the Ocean, and delving to the center of the earth,

earth, hanging on ropes and scaffolds, and whatever bold man has invented, is not frightfull enough to deter others, where there's either *Profit* or *Admiration*. Let but one desperate beginner shew the way, and he will not want multitudes of followers, if either vanity or gain second his adventures. Since then the force of *Example* appears so great, the loss by wanting it must needs be equivalent, and consequently the wrong done to Christians by taking it away, can be of no less importance. And therfore the question whether custome (so available to the improvement of vertue) should be maintained in the Church, is no triviall or inconsiderable controversie. a

Nephew. I perceive you still continue (according to your promise) to demonstrate the *necessity* and *importance* of controverted points in Religion, by shewing their force and activity in producing profitable and advantageous effects for mankinds attainment to eternall happiness, which certainly is a very connaturall and efficacious proof. But I fear all disputes are not capable of that *Medium*. For how is it possible to defend

SECT. 10.

That the Sacraments of Order and Matrimony, the Generality of Ceremonies, or the Opinion of Miracles are necessary?

Uncle. You remember I propos'd a division of some things which concern'd the Breeding, others the Conservation of Vertue and Devotion: For though such things as augment

ment vertue, do likewise of necessity conserve it, yet there may be some which properly are to conserve and not to augment, or at least, of two that perform both, one may conserve because breeds it, the other may augment, because conserves it. Now if we find any thing, whose principall effect is onely to hinder such contrarieties as would destroy piety and devotion, such, properly speaking, augment it not of themselves, yet may be truly said to conserve it. Farther, if you consider, you shall find this hindering of opposites to vertue is perform'd two wayes: First, by removing whatever may put us in fear of yeelding to the contrary, which is a kind of strengthening the weakness of our Nature. Secondly, by diminishing the force and violence of these contrarieties, either in themselves, or in their action. In the first manner contribute all kind of *Ceremonies*, and particularly those used in the Instalments and Beginnings of offices and charges, as the Sacraments of *Order* and *Matrimony*. And likewise the opinion of Miracles. For *Ceremonies*, their nature in generall is, to put in our heads the conceit of a high and sublime mystery, whereby we proceed with greater caution and wariness in the business we have in hand. And for *Miracles*, the beliefe and opinion of them once well grounded (as it ought to be) makes the people extreamly apprehensive of the presence of Almighty God, and of his immediate governing humane affairs. So that, as to be over-credulous of Miracles, is the sign of a light and imprudent mind (for, according to reason, the stranger the thing is, the greater ought the proof be to make us beleeve it) so, not to think some miracles in common, have

have been, and are now done in the Catholike Church, were to contradict the universal & constant opinion of all good Christians, & deserves to be suspected of not beleeving the particular providence of *Almighty God*, which is the main string whereon all Christianity and supernaturall Religion absolutely depends, and which all Masters of piety and devotion have always sought to ground strongly in the souls of their Disciples.

Neph. But how will this be true in Matrimony (for that concerns me) the use whereof consists in such a material and sensuall pleasure? I have often reflected why the Catholike Church (which so highly esteems Virginity) should place Marriage among the Sacraments, and use so many and solemn Ceremonies in the administration of it.

Uncle. You speak like a yongster, And I would to God your conceit were not so deeply rooted in the hearts of many young men, like your self. The Apostle tells you, that the right and *lawfull use of the bed is honourable*, and that women are to be sav'd by Τεκνογονία, *bringing forth children*. God almighty has bestowed this procreation of children on his servants, as a chief temporal blessing, which wee see in *Abraham*, and the good woman that entertained *Elias*; And surely it was the first blessing that the bounty of God confer'd on his creatures. If you consider for what end God sanctifies any action, you shall find it is onely for mans use; and then reflect on the *goods* which follow the lawful use of this material action betwixt man and wife, and you will soon cease to wonder that our Saviour has placed a Sacrament in Matrimony. I doubt not but the light of reason tells you, that, in respect of

of good œconomy, the having but one wife, and perpetual cohabitation with her, is the best manner of secular living, both in order to temporal advantages, and to a quiet and contented life. Which supposed, *Marriage* must needs be a matter of great consideration; for either a man must be without a woman (which is but for few) or be obliged constantly to live with her whom he has once taken: and therefore it is of high importance, that this manner of life be of its own nature convenient and grateful. Besides, you know the husband takes a great content and felicity in his wife, generally speaking; (which sometimes drawes him to strange inconveniences, unless his passions be well moderated and settled) for he considers her as his best friend, his best servant, and dearest partner in all his businesses, supposing she be wise and prudent, and consequently alwayes complying in reason with her husbands humour. Thus you see the making of a Marriage, and using it, when tis made, is the pin whereon depends the chief content and sweetness of a life, that nearly concerns far the greatest part of the world; the foundation on which is laid the hope of posterity, the success and improvement of their temporal estate and fortunes; and above all the breeding of their children, and instilling piety and vertue into their tender hearts, which may grow up with their age, and carry them to eternal felicity. Judge now, *Cozen*, whether it was not convenient, that in the law of grace this action should be elevated and ranked in the highest degree of those which God has sanctified for the use of man: and ought we not to commend and prefer the wisdome of our Forefathers, before all other Na-

Nations, for making so great esteem of Marriage, and celebrating it with such grave ceremonies?

Nephew. Truly *Uncle*, I owe you for this good lesson, because it may be of special use to my self; and I could wish it were well explicated to all before they marry. For my self, I thank God, *I* am so well sped, *I* need not wish to have learn'd it sooner; But I beg your pardon to ask your opinion concerning the other part of the division, what those things are you said were necessary to break the force of contrarieties and temptations against vertue, and which might comfort and strengthen our hearts in this distress? I cannot imagine what you aym at here, unless you think that to this end

SECT. II.

Praying for the dead, Extream Unction, and Confession are necessary.

Uncle. Setting aside the temptations of sensuall pleasure, which we suppose moderated by Marriage, there remains fear and grief. Fear is chiefly of death and judgment following. Grief is for losses; of which to rationall and ingenious persons, the greatest is of friends, amongst whom the chief, and principall is Almighty God, who is lost by sin, as all the rest are by their death. Which last occasion of sorrow is very much qualified by the belief of their surviving, and that we shall once enjoy them again: whence proceeds the desire of continuing amity and communication with them; which being onely obtainable by the mediation of Al-

Almighty God, must be performed by our addresses to him for them, if we think they stand in need. And so a great part of this grief is taken away among Catholikes by the diversion of care to procure prayers for their friends deceased; and another part turned to Almighty God by hoping good for them at his hands: Whereas others give their friends over in death with a *Farewel frost*, or else are plunged into an intolerable sorrow for an incurable loss; the belief of enjoying them again, when there is no communication in the interim, being but cold comfort, that sink's not deeply into our minds, as things far off generally little move us.

The fear of death is much moderated by the Sacrament of *Extream Unction*: The assistance which vertuous Parish-Priests afford to the poor languishing patient by the administration of this Sacrament, comforting him and praying for him (according to St. *Jame*'s command, and the Churches practise) must needs be of great consequence in such an Exigent; Nay what comfort can be indeed so little, that in this period of distress and last moment of deaths agony ought not be accounted great? It was not surely without mystery (said *Gregory Lopes*, a great patern of perfection, even in our age) that our Saviour *Jesus Christ* would have his Apostles accompany and pray with him in that dolorous Agony, in the garden of *Gethsemani*; which, how much he desir'd, sufficiently appears by his twice going to them to see how they performed their charge, and by his exprobation to St. *Peter*, for his negligence and drowsiness.

There rests now onely to seek a remedy, for a conscience laden with sin: which how great

great a torture it is, you may easily imagine by the expression and apprehension the Heathens had of it; who were perswaded that Devils or furies stood continually with burning torches, before the eyes of the wicked, and that the Ghosts of murdered persons continually haunted the murtherers, till they brought them to madness, or some mischeivous end. Now both nature and experience teaches us, that the best and onely remedy for a soul, charged with a secret grief, is, to reveal it intirely to some faithful friend, whose wisdom and charity may relieve the afflicted mind with comfort and assistance. For this end our Saviour *Jesus Christ* instituted the Sacrament of Penance; with the privilege of silence, so inviolable, that neither the law of God nor man can exact in any case the disclosing this secret, what dammage soever were to follow on't. Which let any impartial and understanding person consider; and then judge of what infinite advantage it is to a multitude of men, (not rained down from heaven impeccable, but framed of the dung of the earth, full of imperfections and weakness) to have by order of law some select persons of learning and discretion set, to comfort and direct them, for the amendment of their lives; on whom they may confidently relie for Counsel, & safely open the truth of their case, since they are absolutely unquestionable for what they hear in confession, and extreamly punishable, if they reveal the least sylable. He knows not what a friend is worth, who knows not how great a benefit this is.

Nephew. I easily believe, (and think every indifferent mind must needs be of the same judgement) that the practise and execution of this point

point alone would make so great a change in the peoples behaviour, (if well perform'd) that hence only it would evidently appear *that Religion* to be better where this were admitted, & *that worse* which refused it. But I wonder (*Uncle*) all this while you have said nothing of that famous question of communicating *under Both kinds*, which so many moderate Protestants object as a chiefe stumbling-block that offends them.

Uncle. That's a point, *Nephew*, where the affirmative part belongs to them: And therefore they are obliged to shew the utility or necessity of communicating in both kinds. Which if they cannot perform, and that we know God gives us no laws, but for our good & profit, a discreet considerer will easily, and may justly presume Almighty God never commanded it, but left it to discretion. And for them to bring any evident proof of a positive precept (since the contrary has been practised in some Churches, and to some persons (as children in all ages) I am confident is absolutely impossible.

These points are sufficient to satisfie any indifferent inquirer, that it is not out of obstinacy or vain-glory, the Catholike Church maintains her positions, and forbids communion to Protestants; but forc'd by great necessity, and true grounds of Government, without which no community can subsist. For if every single doctrine may be thus demonstrated of no small importance to the increase of vertue, (as you see it may by these we have discoursed) how much more does the bulk of all together make a schism, deserving to be lopt from the tree of life? But chiefly that headstrong taking the Bit in the teeth, and that unbridled ranging in matters of

highest

higheſt difficulty and conſequence, without any reſpect to the power and authority ordained by *Ieſus Chriſt*, or the leaſt reverence either to their forefathers, or preſent Government: the ready way to all ſedition, the grand Maxim of all rebellion in what community ſoever, either ſpiritual or temporall.

Nephew. This your laſt inference touches a point I have a great deſire to hear well diſcuſſed, *The Popes Authority*, which you know our Proteſtants pretend to be a great inconvenience in all political Government.

Uncle. The old phraſe permits not the Shoomaker to judge above his Laſt: nor am I willing to meddle in this point, or determine what is convenient or inconvenient of the Popes Authority, in reſpect of ſecular Governments. For being unskilful in this matter, and diſcourſing onely, as you ſee, by common ſenſe, I might perhaps offend in venturing beyond my talent, which would be imputed to the weakneſſe of my cauſe. Onely, this I know, I muſt and will honour the Pope as St: *Peters* ſucceſſor, and Head of Chriſts Church on earth. Which Authority, I am ſure, was never inſtituted, nor does it tend, of its own nature, to the detriment or prejudice of any lawfull Government, of what quality ſoever. And, if thoſe were preſent, who, perhaps, as ignorant as my ſelf in the Rules of Government, object ſo many things againſt this power, I durſt undertake to anſwer and ſatisfie them all.

Nephew. Though you will not pleaſe to meddle in this point, yet can you not refuſe to teach me, how to anſwer the ordinary objections againſt our Religion: Which if I could ſolidly perform, I ſhould make it clear and evident

That

SECT. 12.

That good Institutions are not to be given over for small inconveniences; That the abuses are to be mended, not the things taken away; and therefore the party which broke Communion, is to return to the other.

INstruct me then, *Uncle*, what I shall say to those who cast in our teeth, that the Catholike Clergie's being unmarried, fills the world with whoredome and Adultery. That the riches of the Clergy deprives Commonwealths of the use of a great part of their Countrey, by their Immunities. That the Clergies strength is capable sometimes to maintain a faction even against the State. Nay that a Religious Order, especially such as has great power over its subjects, is able (a thing not unpractiz'd) to bandy and make good its part against both Church and State, with no small damage and danger to both, if not prevented. These points must needs avert any State, much more a schismaticall one from our Religion, since we suppose them to be necessary.

Uncle. As for the Clergies single life, every one knows we confesse 'tis not a matter of necessitie, by the law of Christ. Yet that 'tis most fit and convenient, I think no wise head can doubt. For of all pleasures the carnall most affects sensible nature, & produces the violentest extremities of passion, and consequently the strongest binder of our hearts to earthly things, & the greatest hinderer from heavenly and spiritual thoughts, that nature

ture has placed in man. It were needless to tell you how unfit this sensual imployment is for those, whose main life and generalaction ought to be exerciz'd in preaching and teaching celestial and supernatural doctrines; whose principal aym, even by their function and profession, is to draw us from this clod of earth, and elevate our minds to God and spiritual affections. From wedlock follows the love of wife and children, and the necessary cares of houshold (which the Apostle (1 *Cor.*7.) calls the afflictions or tribulations of the flesh:) And from them the evil government of the Church, which either must be hereditary, or neglected; the predecessor still striving to leave nothing to his successor which himself can make use of, to improve his provision for his children. Lastly, the very conceit of chastity and the solitude of an unmarried person, breeds such an apprehension and particular regard towards him, that the people are much better govern'd by such a one. Nor is celibate the cause of those disorders, truly found in some places too frequent, but the multiplication of Priests: which indeed, brings this sacred Function into contempt among the layty, (whose Tutors, Priests are, by Christ's institution) and makes them esteem'd as Servants: And this common undervaluing begets in the Priests themselves a low and cheap conceit of their own dignity and duty; and so become careless of their honour and carriage. And, to say truth, considering the difficulty of chastity and frailty of humane nature, 'tis not likely whole multitudes, living in liberty and perpetual occasions of fallings, should observe so hard a rule as is expressed by *Qui potest capere, capiat. Mat.*19. Wherefore not the

the Eccleſiaſtical command of chaſtity (which you ſee is both ornamental and uſeful for the Government of the Church) but the multiplication of Prieſts (eſpecially young and unworthy ones) ought to be taken away, and ſo the ſcandal would ceaſe.

Nephew. But I have heard, that multitudes of Prieſts are requiſite for the magnificence of the Church; for the convenient hearing of Maſs, eſpecially on holy dayes; and the better adminiſtration of the Sacraments, and helping both of living and dead, by the ineſtimable Sacrifice of the Altar, which cauſes many to take Prieſthood meerly out of devotion.

Uncle. I have heard many ſay ſo too, but they conſidered not that the neceſſity of government and inſtruction is the chief neceſſity of the Church? and that the Clergy is made and inſtituted for this government (having the adminiſtration of the Sacraments purpoſely reſerved to them, to procure them veneration and authority, for the better performance of their Office): nor ought any be made Prieſt but for this end, the *neceſſity of inſtruction and government.* And this Biſhops ſhould take care of: not conferring Orders, but where the Prieſts creation is neceſſary for his flock; and then they would live better themſelves, and be more honoured by their ſubjects. This was the practiſe of the Primitive Church; till the ambition of Deacons (who had the temporalities of the Church in their hands) made them deſire honour, and ſo they were exalted to Prieſthood. The like ambition I believe, was the inventor of thoſe fair reaſons you alledge: for well may it be magnificence in a Prince to have many ſervants; but to have many

chief

chief Heads and Governors, must needs lessen their esteem. And for hearing Mass, if the people be well govern'd, few Priests will suffice; nor is the inconvenience so great as rises from the multiplicity of Priests. And the same reason may be apply'd to the administration of the *Sacraments*; as also to the other objection of helping both living and dead by the holy Sacrifice of the Altar. As for those who desire this sacred Character out of devotion, I think their devotion would be more conformable to the piety of our forefathers, if they did rather shun then seek it, especially where there are so many already that both unnecessarily and unprofitably wear it. And as there cannot be an outward work of greater Piety and Charity, then to provide the people fit Instructors and Governors, nor Alms better bestow'd, then to procure this effect: so in my conceit there cannot be an act of greater sacrilege and impiety, then to *order* and depute unworthy subjects to this high and sacred employment; and whoever, out of faction, friendship, or carelesness, should commit so heynous a crime, are worse then Adulterers, Murtherers, or whose sins cry to heaven for vengeance. But this I speak onely as my own opinion.

Nephew. Though I think you have the right, yet I believe there are not many of your mind. For, as to commissionate a great number of undeserving Judges and Governors in a Commonwealth, were to ruine it; so to multiply Priests, not proportionably qualified to their Function, is to hazard the spirituall good of Christianity; and to make an unworthy Parish Priest, is in a manner to damn the whole Parish.

Uncle. For your second Objection, of the Clergies

Riches, though I am none of those that think the Clergy, or any other spirituall company whom they affect, cannot be too rich; yet I see no such inconvenience in their wealth, but it is easily remedied. For, in all Catholike countries, there are means found out to diminish their riches, and make them contribute to the necessities of the State, as fully as others, in proportion; though in an honorable way. As, no let them appoint their own Collectors of the Subsidies required at their hands. Besides, the Clergy, not making any vow or profession of renouncing either riches or honor, and bearing the greatest charge and office in the Commonwealth, it is fitting and necessary they have all temporall accommodation requisite for the due performance of their Function. As, first, to be out of sollicitude for convenient maintenance. 2. To have an equall conversation with their subjects. 3. To give example of the true use of riches. And 4. to breed a convenient respect of their quality and persons, in those whom they are to govern by their perswasions and authority. And by these Rules it may easily be measured when the Clergies riches are excessive.

You will say, perhaps, the *Clergies* authority ought to be grounded on their Learning, Wisdom, and chiefly their Vertue. Tis true, but those they are to guide having not, for the most part, eyes to see and judge of such internall qualities, but generally esteem of the inward man by the outward appearance; it is necessary they likewise have those exterior advantages. For your third and last objection, I could quit my self in a word, and tell you, I intend not to justifie the *Practice* of any, but onely the *Tenets* of the

the Catholike Church. And if at any time either Clergy or Religious should bandy against the State, it were the fault of the men not of the institution; in which case, God has left means to curb and punish them: For, the Clergy being an essentiall and principal part of the Commonwealth, as well as the Nobility or Commons, 'tis the same case for all three; And such an act were to be imputed to the weakness and corruption of mans nature, as well in the Clergy as the other two. And thus I hope you are now satisfied in this point.

Nephew: I am, for the Clergy, and see you as to have reason; but for Religious Orders, 'tis not the same case; since neither is there such necessity of them as of the Clergy, nor are they any publick part of the Commonwealth, but onely privat institutions within it. Besides, *I* have heard wise and experienc'd men say, Religious obedience is easily turned into an instrument of faction. For their subjects being bound under pain of damnation to obey their Superior in any thing not manifestly sin, gives the Superior an absolute command over the whole Body (specially if it be purely Monarchical, where one governs all) and consequently, a strange and dangerous influence to sway great multitudes at his pleasure. I heard not long since, a wise and penetrating head (formerly imploy'd by our State in Catholick Countries) say, that Princes sometimes were extreamly afraid of their powerfull combinations; and held it no small policie to imploy and engage Religious Orders in their interests of State: whereas, for the Clergy, they fear'd them not, having no such obligation of obedience among them, but onely according

to the *Canons*; nor any dangerous dependents of forraign powers, but every one for himself, and therefore unable to do the Commonwealth any considerable either service or prejudice.

Uncle. Lord! *Cosen*, how different is the truth from the common opinion of the world. Religious men are governd either by vows or Rules; their vowes make them religious, their rules direct them to live in peace and vertue. Their vow of obedience, you speak of, reaches onely the spiritual education and progress of their subjects; their rules are for the rest. If their vows concern'd their temporal government, then I confess they were no religious vows, but to be suspected of factious combinations, and both Church and State would be jealous of them; but 'tis not so, and therefore they are laudable and no wayes prejudicial to Government. And for the religious man's Rule, (which onely, and not his Vow, binds him to all temporal subjection) 'tis of no great importance; nay, some of them profess their Rule obliges not in conscience (as the Canon and Civil law do) no nor under a venial sin. You see then 'tis far from Catholike Religion to patronise any banding against either Church or State; and so far that every Divine will inform you, obedience, in such a case, is damnable both to the commander and obeyer. Nay, they will tell you, if any religious Order were come to that height of ambition (which God forbid) as to bend their aymes and endeavours generally to the prejudice of Church or State, seeking to ruine the ancient and lawful Government of either, to set up their own; that, it were a sin to enter into such an Order, and the vows of those already professed would not oblige

lige them to obedience, nor could such an institute be truly esteem'd a religious Order. And now I hope you are fully satisfied.

Other objections there are besides these you produce, but either they pitch upon abuses instead of uses, as these do, or aym to take away the substance of a *thing*, because of certain accidental inconveniences that happen, though never so seldom in the practise of it: As if all iron tooles should be forbidden by reason sometimes they are abus'd into instruments of great mischief. And though Protestants say, they are not so uncharitable to condemn Catholikes (which, according to their rule of th' *Errability* of all men, and of the liberty they assume to themselves, were palpably absurd): yet, in effect, they do, and must needs, or else desert their pretences and dispures with us, at the very beginning. For, if *Luther* or *Calvin* were urg'd, Is the use of reverencing Pictures, Idolatry or no? They must of necessity answer *yes*; or be convinc'd to break from the present Church (whereof they are yet apart) without sufficient cause. If they be farther prest, Can you evidently convince 'tis Idolatry? or may it be probably maintain'd 'tis not? If they acknowledge it undemonstrable, then they are oppressed again: If it be but *peradventure yes*, *peradventure no*, why do you make a schisim and division in the Church, and not submit to the belief of your Forefathers and of the present universal Christianity? If they reply, when neither part is certain, each may hold what he thinks fit: You ask them again, is this your reply certain? can you convince it evidently? or is it but onely probable? If onely probable, they are still in the same snare; if certain and evident,

they might have said so of the first proposition. But indeed, it were against common sense, and too ridiculous for any private brain to undertake to make an evident conviction and demonstration, against the general beliefe of so many ages. And thus you see these *Novellists*, who cannot convince any thing against the *Arrians*, *Nestorians*, *Pelagians*, *Berengarians*, and the like, (though long since condemned by the *Catholike Church*) think all probable, that a company of learned and indifferent men have questioned; nay use this for a Maxim, that such points must necessarily be doubted of, as being not within the reach of evident conviction; let them but come to write against Catholikes, and you shall have them pretend whole lists of demonstrations, whole pages will not suffice to reckon up the absurdities they imagine follow out of some one Catholike doctrine; so fatal and necessary is it, that they contradict themselves, who contardict the truth of Christ and his Church.

Nephew. Your argument proceeds wel against the first beginners of the breach; but not against them that now live, who seem to be quietly setled, and receive their doctrine from their Fathers. For possession, though at first unlawfully gotten, in time prevails; and quarrels at length cease, even where Princes are pretenders. If the *Welch-men* should now rise, with a long Remonstrance how unjustly they were put out of *England* by the *Saxons*; The *Romans* out of *France* by the *French*; The *Greeks* out of *Italy* by the *Goths*, who would not laugh at such wither'd and obsolete titles? So, why should *Protestants* (though their time be not so long, nor possession so quiet) rather yeild to the Church of Rome, then

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the Church of Rome to them; unless the Church of Rome can demonstrate her positions against the Protestants, which I have not heard any of our learned writers say she can?

Uncle. Though it be both reasonable in all likelyhood, and perhaps demonstrable, that, Who first parted and made the division, ought in law of good government, to return: and though I could pretend, the Church of *England*, compar'd to *that* which lives in community with the Romans, is but a smal part, and therefore bound to yeild to the greater; (for to affirm, that the Protestants of England live in community with all other Churches but the Roman, is manifestly false, since all other Churches Anathematize divers of their *Tenets*, and they the *Tenets* of all other Churches, nor is there any rule of unity and communion amongst them) Though I say, I could urge these and other reasons to this effect, yet I will onely propose two.

First, That the Catholike Church cannot yeild to Protestants, without essentially ruining her self; and therefore no possibility of union, unless the Protestants will bend. For if the Catholike Church essentially subsists on this principle, *That she has received her doctrine from Jesus Christ by word of mouth, and succession from hand to hand, which cannot fail*; should she yeild to the Church of England in any point believ'd upon that ground, is it not evident she must of necessity let go her hold, and forsake her onely principle, whereon relyes all her faith & belief? Is it not manifest she may as well abandon all, as any one Article she holds upon this tenure and motive. Whereas Protestants building their doctrine and positions on no such ground, but onely their owne

(at most probable) interpretation of Scripture, which they may change upon better consideration, are in far easier terms to yeild, and that even without prejudice to their religion or judgment: Because, *Tenets*, embrac't onely upon probability, may be chang'd on any good occasion or new discovered motive, without the least blemish or disparagement. And surely what Church soever thinks not her self *unerrable*, confesses she may be deceiv'd; and therefore it were temerity for such a Church to hold any point certainly true; And if she hold not any point certainly true, why should not the very reasons of State and interest seek to have them changed and setled secure and infallible?

The second is, that the Protestant is bound by the light of reason to yeild to the Catholike communion. For if nature teach us, that a Protestant's practise ought not contradict his principles; And that the necessity and force of Experience, convinces there's no government in a Church without prescribing some *Tenets* and forbidding others; and that 'tis evident this is contrary to the liberty of opinion, which the Protestant puts for his first and chief Maxim to approve his separation from the Roman Church: will it not clearly follow, that either the Protestants must break with reason and nature, by holding liberty in their judgements and understandings, and obliging to obedience in their wills and practises; or else, close with Catholikes in their judgements, and profess the *unerrability* of the Church, at least so far as obliges its subjects not to withstand or oppose, but submit and obey its Canons and commands? And for your examples of politick States, which by possession and pre-

scrip-

ſcription have at length obtained right; you muſt remember all their beginnings and grounds are upon humane nature and conſent of men, and conſequently by the ſame law they were made may be alter'd; But the Church of God was eſtabliſhed by Chriſt and his Miniſters, and therefore reaſon tells us, her Inſtitution is to be inviolably conſerved, againſt which no preſcription of time can ever prevail. Wherefore ſince that Church from which Proteſtants parted, held then and ſtill maintains, that the Church of God is and can be but one in all ages and places, (a poſition ſhe profeſſes to have received in the ſame manner, and on the ſame ground as the reſt of her doctrine) Proteſtants muſt of neceſſity firſt ſhew they are the true Church of Chriſt, before they can plead poſſeſſion or preſcription. For if there can be but one Church, no preſcription can make them that *one*; when at their very beginning and ever ſince, another both was and is in more quiet poſſeſſion then they, and pleads the ſame title more ſtrongly.

Nephew. I ſee now there remains no other queſtion, but whether Proteſtants can convince their poſitions or no? which I believe would be a hard task. Wherefore I thank you heartily for this good leſſon: It grows late, I fear I detain you too long from your repoſe.

Uncle. They ought indeed to convince and demonſtrate their *Tenets*; and I know no other way they have but Scripture, which we hold not ſufficient to determine controverſies without Tradition. I have no more to ſay at preſent, but wiſh you may begin this new year with a good nights reſt, which God ſend us both.

THE SECOND

DIALOGVE.

The Introduction.

Section 1.

VNCLE. How now, *Cozen*, what makes you early this morning?

Nephew. Sir, I am come to tell you a scruple, I had last night torments me ever since; That we Catholikes, who bear so great reverence and veneration to the holy Scripture, receive more of it then others, write infinite volumes of commentaries upon it (as *Pauls Church-yard* can witness) and are so exact to improve our selves (I mean such as attend to learning) in the knowledge of it; should nevertheless, when we come to joyne in the main point, *the decision of controverses*, seem to fly off and recur to other Judges, though we all acknovledge it to be Christs owne word and law. And now I have told you my difficulty, I will leave you to your better imployments, knowing how precious you accompt your mornings; and shall wait on you for your answer another time.

Uncle: Stay, *Cozen*; God forbid I should think I could better bestow my time then to give you satis-

satisfaction, in a question of such importance; or you importune to me, by desiring the knowledge of what is so necessary for you, I were to blame, if I would not leave even my prayers, to assist you in this point: which though I must confess I am somewhat unwilling to dive into; for I see by experience, the one part seeks all imaginable wayes to destroy the authority of Gods Church, and the other seems to lessen the power of Scripture as to the deciding of controversies; so that indifferent and unfetled persons are left, as it were wholly without all meanes of finding the truth: However that indispensable thing, *necessity*, will absolutely excuse and justify our search, though it be to the quick; For were our adversaries able to resolve clearly (as they still promise) all points of controversies by Scripture, we were worse then beasts, if we refused that judgement: But, if to stand to only Scripture be but a plausible way to Atheism, and so reduce the question to this, Whither we must rely on a Church or be Athiests, (for we believe, by Scripture alone (lest without the guard of the Church) nothing, or at least, not enough for the salvation of mankind, can be sufficiently prov'd) then every one will see, we are forc'd by reason and religion to make evident as fas as we can, the necessity of depending on a Church, and to use all our power to perswade and evince so important a conclusion.

You may remember, *Cozen*, we said, yesternight; that Christian Religion or the Law of *Jesus Christ*, cannot be learn'd by wit and study but by authority, and by receiving it from Him: As also that he is no true Believer, nor really of the community of Christians (whatever be his ma-teri-

materiall faith) who accepts not that Rule and means, which *Jesus Christ* has left and ordain'd for the receit of his Law: and the same censure belongs to him who follows any other rule. Now this means can be no other, then either Scripture, or Tradition, or both; it will therefore evidently follow, that we must be no Christians, or else acknowledge Tradition to be this Rule; if we can shew, that the Scripture has not the conditions requisite for determining controversies, not was made or left to the Church for this end.

Nephew. The greater the necessity of this question appears, the gladder am I to have mov'd it, though methinks, I my self might see, it is not fit to make the Scripture Judge of controversies, because we find by experience, after so many disputations, so many books written on both sides, there is nothing resolved, nor are we the nearer an end; and therefore certainly Scripture alone will never decide our quarrels, never determine our disputes.

Uncle, Well, *Cousin*, since you will have it so, our first question shall be

SECT. 2.

Whether Tradition for Scripture be of equall force as for points of Doctrine?

AND first, tell me, Do you think the Apostles, when they went about the world to preach *Christ Jesus*, carried with them all the books of the Old and New Testament, either ready translated into the languages of the people whom they endeavoured to convert, or else caused them

them to be translated by the first Christians?

Nephew. I never thought of this question before; but I see well enough they could not carry all with them: For some parts certainly were not made before they went to preach; nay, I am not assur'd whether any of the New Testament was written before their dispersion from *Jerusalem*; so that well may they have taken the Old Testament with them, (if they thought fit) but for the New they could not.

Uncle. Very true, I'le tell you then, how the authority of the New Testament came into the Church. An Apostle or Disciple, writing a Book, or Epistle, communicated it to that Church or Countrey where he preach'd, or to which he addrest it; that Church communicated it to their neighbours, as the work of such a person; and by degrees it grew from one province to another, till it was spread over the whole Christian world. So that some Countries had not all the books of the New Testament compleat for a long time: Wherefore no wonder some have doubted of severall parts thereof, being not able to aver, (as not assured by reason of some accident) that such Books were truly the works of an Apostle or Disciple; which, notwithstanding, better intelligence being obtained, might justly be afterwards receiv'd for Scripture. And here you may note by the way, the *Roman Church* is *that* to which in reason we ought to give most credit touching the Canon of Scripture. For *Rome* being then (at least for the first three hundred years) to the Christian world, or rather to all the Christians dispersed in divers parts of the world, as *London* is to *England*; And we see the collection of remarkable

passages

passages in severall Provinces of our Nation, is sooner and more perfectly made in *London*, then any other part of our Countrey: it must needs follow, that the collection of Holy Scripture, or New Testament, was more exactly seisable at *Rome*, then any other place. But this by the way. For my aim is to make you judge, by comparing any one substantiall point, which the Apostles with common consent preach'd through the whole world, to any one Book of the new Testament, which soever you think first or best received; whether of the two descended to us with more certainty, That to be the Apostles doctrine, This such an Apostles Book?

Nep. I should distinguish your question: for either it may be compar'd to that particular Province where the Apostle himself delivered it, both in word & writing, or to the whole Church: And I confess, in respect of the whole Church, That point of doctrine, which is every where preach't, must have more certainty: but where both are equaly deliver'd, by the same Apostle to the same Church, I should think the work of more Authority then the word: For 'tis easie to let slip a word sometimes; whereas writing requires a more setled consideration.

Uncle. If the question be of a particular Church or Province, I doubt it will not be sufficient to give us a firm authority, for either one or the other; unless we add more circumstances then are yet declared. The reason is, because one Province may have had Religion so ruined and destroyed, by the incursion of infidels, that recovering themselves after a long time, they may as well mistake one Book as one Doctrine, for another; and so this point is not much to our

purpose

pose. Though, even in this case, the Doctrine taught by Word of mouth has these advantages. It is deliver'd to many; the Book to few, or perhaps in some one place. The Doctrine heard and understood by all, the Book known onely to such as can read, nor to all them, but to such as apply their care to its perusal. The Book belongs not much to the practise of the multitude, the Doctrine governs their whole lives. The Book brought often times, by one man (as some Messenger, if it be an Epistle) or sent from some other place, with the single recommends of one person, as *Titus* or *Timothy*, to whom it was first written, and on whose Authority, onely, the whole verity must originally rely.

But to return to our case. Do you not see the whole Church trusts some one particular person, at the first, on whom she builds her belief, that, this is such an Apostles work, that is *Scripture*? But, for any material point of doctrine, she relyes on the Universal knowledge of them who heard it preach't in divers parts of the world. So that, as I intend not to say, the one is certain, the other not, (for a particular Churche's authority may be certain in some circumstances;) yet I must needs affirm, betwixt these two certainties, there's such a difference, as if the one were to bring in *verdict* upon the other, it woud be much more forcible and evident to conclude, this Book is Scripture, because conformable to the doctrine taught and preached, then that this doctrine is Apostolical, because conformable to the Book. For if it be true, the whole Church once relyed on some particular Province, for this verity, it can never come to pass, that the certainty of this Book rise higher then the Authority

thority of that particular Church was at that time: And consequently the same comparison which is betwixt the authority of this particular Church and of the universal) may be made betwixt the certainty of this Book's being Scripture, and of this point of Doctrine's being Catholike and Apostolike.

And for the inconvenience you were jealous of, it falls out quite contrary: For, whether we consider the inspiration and assistance of the Holy Ghost, or the industry and care of man, you shall alwayes finde the end more regarded then the means, and among divers means the most immediate to the end is still most aymed at; wherefore, in our case, the end, both of writing and speaking, being The delivery of this doctrine for the good of the people; no doubt, but, both the assistance of the Holy Ghost, and the endeavours of man tends more principally to the delivery of this doctrine, then to other things that came in by chance, in which only there might be a slip, as you imagine. Since then Tradition contains not all the words the Apostles spake, but meerly what belongs to Christian Doctrine, (which was principally intended, and the chiefe errand of the Apostles) and that, in the Scripture, many things are written on occasion, and as it were by the bye: questionless both in respect of the Assistance of the Holy Ghost, and the diligence of man, the certainty will be greater of the Doctrine delivered *by word of mouth*, then of the *holy writ*. Besides, the slips you speak of are, when things are onely once delivered, or spoken without great premeditation; whereas this doctrine was often repeated and perpetually inculcated, so that there can be no fear of such mistakes.

For

For the Old Testament, as I confess 'tis possible the Apostles might have delivered it in all Countries where they preach't; so I believe 'tis evident, they never did, since the Church has no such memory: and the Canon being doubted by some, the Jewish Canon was alledg'd; whereof there had been no use or need, if the Apostles had left to all Churches the Book it self. Probably therefore, the Old Testament was brought in by the first Christians of the Circumcision, who accepted those books they saw the Apostles honor & make use of, and from them it came to the gentil Christians, and at length was universally receiv'd by the whole Church, with the same veneration the Apostles & Jewish christians gave to it. But however, you may perhaps conceive at least

SECT. 3.

That Tradition, for Scripture, is more universal then for Doctrine.

Nephew. Surely *Uncle*, the Scripture has a more universal Tradition then any point of Christian doctrine; at least, disputed betwixt us and Protestants: since all Christians agree in the acceptation of the Scripture, and far fewer in divers points of doctrine. For the Churches of the Roman communion are no such extraordinary part of Christendome, compar'd to all the rest.

Uncle. For the extent of the Churches, I cannot certainly tell you the truth; because I fear many are call'd Christians, who have little, either in their belief or lives, to verifie that name. But you know, in witnesses, the quality is to be respected, as well, and more then the quantity: So that those Countries, in which Christianity

is

is vigorous, are to be preferred before a greater Extent of such whose little remains more then the name. And to come nearer your difficulty, suppose in a suite of Law, one party had seven legitimate witnesses, the other as many, and besides them, *twenty Knights of the post*, (known perjur'd knaves) would you cast the cause for this wicked rabble?

Nephew. By no means; for seeing the Law invalidates their testimony, I were injurious to make any accompt of them; and therefore should judge the scales equal.

Uncle. By the same reason, They who challenge a more universal *Tradition* for Scripture, then for Doctrin, must first be certain there's no lawful exception against those Christians, they call in for witnesses; as *Arrians*, *Nestorians*, *Eutychians* and the like. Now the Catholike Church accounts all these clearly unfit for testimony, as being guilty of Heresie and Schism: and therefore he that gives credit to their words, must, by taking them for honest, rank himself their fellow, and consequently disclaim the Roman Church, as wicked and altogether disabled to attest the least truth; from whom nevertheless, he receiv'd what ever he has of Christ. Besides, the evidence these can give is, only, that They received Scripture from that Church, which excluded them from communion at their beginnings, and ever continued in opposition against them, *the Catholike*. Wherefore it is manifest, their attestation adds nothing to the Credibleness of the Catholike Church; but only they agree (as long as they please) to what she with authority testifies; nor consequently their vote makes any Tradition more universal. Let us now proceed to consider,

Whether

SECT. 4.

Whether the Text of Scripture can have remain'd incorrupted, or no.

FOr hitherto we have onely confes'd the authority of Scripture in it self, with that of Tradition; now we will come a litle closer, and compare it, as we have it, to the Doctrine delivered by Tradition. I mean, hitherto, we have discoursed, as if we had those very Books the Canonical Writers made with their own hands. But now we will examin (since we have but transcripts of them) what authority these Copies ought to bear; Can you resolve this question?

Neph. I doubt not but for the end we seek, *To make a Judg of controversies*, every word, every letter, every tittle must be admitted of absolute and uncontrolable certainty: And so, I hear, the vulgar Edition in Latin is commanded to be held among us. For I easily see, if any one sentence may be quarrelled, every one will incur the same hazard; all being equally desiver'd and equally warranted by reason and authority.

Uncle. You say very well; for where there's no less then the souls of the whole world at stake, I see not what advantage can give sufficient security, if there remain any notable incertainty. Our Saviour says, *What can all the world avail a man, if he lose his own soul?* So that where the question is, Soul or no soul, salvation or damnation, nothing less then certainty can serve to proceed on. And therfore, no doubt, if the Apostles had intended to leave their holy writings for the sole deciders of controversies in Religion; they would have provided that infallible copies should be preserv'd in the Church, to the end of the world. For such care we see privat men use in their bargains and

and covenants, making their Indentures uncounterfeitable, and enrolling them in publick Offices, where they are to remain uncorrupted: such care have Commonwealths to conserve their Records, specially their Laws, keeping the very originals or authentical copies with great diligence and tenderness.

But what need we look into the examples of men, seeing Almighty God, in his own person, has given us a patern, commanding the *Deuteronomy* to be kept in the Ark, which he had appointed the authentical copy, to judge betwixt Him and his people, and this with the greatest veneration that could be imagin'd. Now this way was impossible for the Apostles to follow, (else surely they would have taken it, if they had intended *Christs* Written law should be our Judge) by reason of the multitude of Nations they were to converse with, and the many languages into which such a book must necessarily be translated, and every copy being confin'd to so small a circuit, not any one could be conserv'd with such security and incorruptibility, as would be requisite in that case, both in respect of the language, and the mutability of the world, subject to a thousand accidents, whereby such books might fall into the hands of those, who would not onely neglect them, but seek either wilfully to corrupt, or utterly destroy that which was to be the Rule and Patern of Christian faith.

For that you say is commanded us, you are mistaken, no wise man thinking the *Vulgar Edition* so well corrected, that much may not be mended; but the Church hath secur'd us, ther's nothing against *Christian faith* or manners contain'd in those Books, which have thus long past for

Scripture,

Scriptures, and are so in deed, as to the substance; and therfore we are forbidden to refuse this Text in any Controversie or Disputation. This we, and we onely can do; for the Churches security rises out of this, that she hath another more primitive and more certain ground of her Faith, *Tradition*; by which, being assured what the truth is, she can confidently pronounce, that In this Book there is nothing contrary or prejudicial thereunto; which no profession, that relies only on Scripture, can pretend; because they must first be assured of the Text, before they can judge of the Doctrine; wherefore if the Text it self need a Judge, if the question be made and closely followed, whether this be the true Text or no, they must needs be at their wits end, according to the most plain and evident Principles of Reason. Let us then examine what ambiguity falls on the Text it self, by the succession of so many Ages, through which it has past to come down to our hands.

There are three ways chiefly whereby the Text may have been corrupted. Fitst, *on set purpose*, of which the Fathers accuse the Hereticks of their times, and of which the Jews also are more then suspected. And though this kind extends not to any great number of corruptions, yet they come to be inevitable, when among so many copies none can discern which have been abus'd, which not: and, as it is but in few points or places, so it is in such as are pickt out & chosen by the corrupter himself, whence they never fail to be important and material. Secondly, *by the negligence of servants who transcrib'd the books*; some being mercenary, that made copies to sell, others witless, who, desirous to have the Bible, out

out of vanity, hypocrisie, or the like, cared not for more, then to say they had it. And, a great part of these Copists may have erred in writing, *by the very Defect of Nature*, which permits not an absolute exactnesse in any thing; but through wearinesse, and even sometimes too much wariness, we are apt to let faults escape from our pen unobserv'd: which last become the more dangerous, by how much the copies seem more exact; and so perhaps hazard to bear down even the true ones. The third way of corruption may have been *by half-wits*, who will undertake to correct by ayme and understanding; and having chanced on the right in some one place, will venture confidently to spoil ten. Of these, before Printing began, that Bibles were not so frequent, 'tis like, there have been divers; who, meeting with a place they could nor make sense of, and spying a little change, would reconcile it, easily ventur'd such a smal dash, not knowing perhaps, where to finde a better copy then their owne. The Hebrew and Greek Testament have been very subject to the first sort of these corruptions; the former being deliverrd to us by the professed enemies of Christ (who as it is reported) in the greatest heat of their hatred to Christianity, sate at *Tiberias* to determine all the vowels of the Old Scriptures; which every Hebritian knows what power it gave them to change the whole text, especially being Jews and publikely accused of forgery in that kind: The Grecian Bible, whilst the condemned Hereticks held so great power in those parts, (as is known they did for some ages) was in little less danger, They being also taxed with the like falsifying impiety. But, the other two wayes of corruptions are common to all,

all; and indeed, unavoidable, in so great a multitude of copies, as were in all the three languages, at least of Greek and Latin. And now *Cozen*, cast in your thoughts what difficulties so many contingencies will produce in the Text it self and

SECT. 5.

What uncertainty the errours of Writers and Copists has bred in Scripture?

Nephew. That passes, Sir, my understanding; for if I should calculate so many copies to have been made, and then estimate what errors may have hapned in every one, the number peradventure would exceed the words of the Bible. For let us take a book of two thousand columns, and suppose (which is very likely) as many copies made in some age of an hundred years: then put 36. lines to a column, and 8. words to a line, so there will be in one column 336. Words; And farther, may we not well reckon as many faults escaped in every copy, (one with another) as there are words in a column; which admitted, you will finde the number of errours, in all the copies made since the Apostles time, amount to 15. or 16. times as many as there are words in the Bible; and so by this accompt, it would be 15. or 16. to one, of any particular place, that it were not the true Text: Which me thinks is too dangerous to be possible.

Uncle. I do not conceive you have taken your proportions too high: for, if you look into the most part, even of printed books, of so great volumn as the Bible, and reveiw them well, you will generally find a whole column of *Errata* in every one; yet printing is done, with more ease to the hand, and less toil to the brain, and has ordinarily

rily two or three corrections before it be drawn off, which advantages written copies have not. But I must tell you, you miss'd in one thing; not marking that the errours of so many copies may have been the same in divers of them: otherwise, truly, your calculation would prove, that we might look for Scripture, in Scripture, and doubt whether we meet with one true syllable of it; and the like, with proportion, in all books. I say, with proportion; for, to conclude altogether, the same of *Cicero*, *Demosthenes* and others, is not reasonable; because there were few copies made of their works, onely for some curious and learned; whereas, the Bible concern'd every one so nearly, that few would be without it, who understood Latin; And yet I doubt not but you remember, since you were a Student, what variety of Texts and pretences of corruptions you found amongst the Criticks and Commentators, even of those prophane Authors. To this your calculation I will add another: Suppose as many written copies extant as the number of your columns, and as much variety in those which have not been examined, as in those which have: And farther, that *Sixtus Quintus*, for setting out his Bible, caus'd onely an hundred to be examin'd; in whose Edition tis known the corrections amount to two thousand; Do you not see, that the computation, made of the various lections of all those copies, would make twenty for every column? Nor truely can we imagine there have been so few, either Latin or Greek copies; whence, whereas, by this reckoning, we onely esteem them 2000. suppose each language has had at least an hundred thousand,

which

which is not improbable in so many ages, and so great extent of Readers; then, if you add those which are not extant (whereof none in particular can be rejected,) they make the case still more ambiguous; because they give occasion and power, out of such or such a probability, to conjecture a truth, and out of conjectural proof, to believe it. For, as we all confess, whatever is certainly known to be Scripture, ought not to be touch't; so what ever may be doubted, whether it be Scripture, obliges to no such respect. Wherefore, if reason conclude and tell us, In all likely hood, there has been twenty *several readings* in every particular column; though perhaps two or three onely are extant, the rest probably known to have been, yet so as there is no certain sign which or where they were: now, comes one and presses a text in this or that column, which his opponent thinks contrary to other places; may he not then justly say, *Sirs*, I mistrust this place to be corrupted? Or can his Adversary prudently urge it on, as an assured Text? or aver for certain that this is none of the 17 unknown *varia lectiones*? Surely abstracting from all warrant and command of the Church, and standing purely to precise reason, he can never maintain his assertion; So that where nothing but Scripture is admitted as judge, all controversies would be ended with a *Non liquet*.

Nephew. I expected you would have shewn me how hard it is to agree about the true sense of the words of Scripture: but now I perceive there is as much difficulty to know whither we have the true Text or no. Which, if it were well conceiv'd and understood by our devout and pure City-wives, who turn o're their Bibles so

nimbly and view the text so curiously when the Preacher cites it; I believe it would much cool the zeal of their spirit, if such a qualm should come over their stomacks, as to think, These words, peradventure, are not the *Holy Scripture*. But to this, *Uncle*, may you not add,

SECT. 6.

What incertitude the multiplicity of Translations has occasioned in Scripture.

Uncle. No doubt but many difficulties spring from the variety of translations: For first, we have no sufficient argument of any infallibility in the Translators; no not of the *Septuagint* themselves, which Protestants will easily grant. I know there's a story, how the *Septuagint*, being separated one from another, their translation happened the same, *word for word*: Which were it certain, I should account their Bible of as great authority as the Original Text it self. But we see even in the Apostles times some sought to mend their interpretation; as *Theodotion* and *Aquila*, whose translations were, nevertheless, accepted by the Church, and conserv'd and esteem'd: So there is no probability, that the Apostles and Church of their times held the *Septuagint* translation to be specially, from the holy Ghost. Nor do's it import that the Apostles sometimes in their speeches or writings quoted this translation; since they must either take it, or none, when they wrote to those, whose language being Greek, would have thought them to have mistaken the text, if they had cited it according to the Hebrew, which often differed from the Greek. Nor can we cer-

tainly

thinly tell it was always the Apostle that used it, & not the Historian; who, writing in Greek, and to Greeians, was oblig'd to put down the Greek words, what translation soever the Apostle had followed, being both to the same effect.

The next point we consider is, that never any began a new version, in the same language, but for some mislike in the former. For, if he thought a new translation necessary, it clearly implies he conceiv'd the former Translator had, in many important points, miss'd and altered the minde of the Author: Nor is it possible a book of so high concernment, should cease to be translated, till there be some inhibition to the contrary; Or that the words of a Translator should arrive at such exactnes as to be taken for the words of the Author: It being contrarywise, the law of a good Translator, not to render word for word with the very original, but to express the sense in the best manner he can. For, since no two languages jump equally in their significations; it is impossible every word of the one should fully and precisely correspond to every word of the other: much less their phrases be punctually the same; so that unavoidably there must be a great variance in particulars, though the sense and meaning, as to their substance in general, agree. When you have conferd any one chapter of two translations in the same language, and found not any one sentence so exactly answer the other, that scanning rigorously the variety of their words, there may not some different sense be gathered out of them; You will certainly conclude it an impossible undertaking to put, fully and beyond all quarrell, the same sense in severall words. And truly, I think, every one will admit at least,

as much diversity betwixt the Original and Translation, as betwixt two Translations: these agreeing in the same tongue, those not, and yet having all the other reasons of disagreeing. I am confident, if we should take 20 of the best Scholars in a school, & give them an Author to translate, either out of Latin into English, or English into Latin; their translations would so vary in many passages, that divers senses might easily be collected out of them: judge then, when wits are set contentiously to discuss every possible variety, what truth can be convinced, where any two may, on so plausible grounds, disagree, though both acknowledge the Author.

Another considerable circumstance is, that Among all ancient Translations, none can be rejected, because it may still be replyed, that the reason of this difference proceeds from a various Copie, out of which they were translated: and not being able to disprove the copy, we can neither justly nor certainly disallow the Translation; having nothing to sustain such refusall but imperfect conjectures. And, if we come to calculate, we may very well suppose there are now at least twenty Translations made into severall languages; I might put more, for there have been perhaps two hundred in the Latin tongue alone, by reason of the vastness of the Roman Empire for so many Ages, and the great esteem of so pretious a book making every one desirous to have an exact Text; none being as yet acknowledged for such, nor any prohibition of new Translations. Which variety of Latin Editions the Protestants themselves confess, and say, very truly, they all perished after St. *Hieromes* correction of the Bible, whose complaints of the diversitie

versity of Texts all the world knows: and indeed the confusion and inconveniences springing from such multiplicity, caused them all to be neglected, though some believe our *Vulgata Editio* has always been conserved.

However we may go on with our supposition, & add, that of those twenty Translations now extant, every one is equall to any other. Let then a sentence be propoled, whose nature and quality is to decide a controversie; but with this condition (which ordinarily happens,) that it depend on the propriety of some word, or the Emphasis of some manner of speaking: Can any reasonable person perswade himself that all these Translations will conspire & perfectly agree in so nice a point? Three or 4 peradventure may, but for 20 it is absolutely impossible. Now if any one of these translations be substantially different, all the rest cannot with certainty or evidence bear it down: Since this might arise out of a different copy, with which, perhaps, agreed more then have survived and are descended to us, and so we shall still return to our former *non liquet*. Hence it follows, that, although a Translation in the whole bulk, be morally the same book with the originall, yet metaphysically and rigorously there is great diversity, and at least *such*, as in our case of a litigious and contentious way of disputing, makes all Translations of the the Scripture utterly unfit to determin controversies.

Neph. Your discourse not onely makes me credit what I have heard reported St. *Augustine* should say, that *he would not believe Scripture unless the Churches authority mov'd him thereunto*; but creates in me a scruple, that your argument tends

too much to the disabling and weakning of Scripture, so happily planted in the Church, so justly raised to this supereminent authority, certainly very usefull to many ends of Religion, though not for the decission of controversies; and therfore I fear you wil overshoot the mark, and in seeking to destroy one error, be in danger of falling into a worse. I am sure, should you preach this Doctrine at St. *Antholins*, the people would stone you with their brazen-corner'd Bibles, though peradventure, if they lay all their heads together, they could not give you a sufficient answer. However, thus much I learn, That they have no reason to object against us our trusting the Church and Pastors for the sense and explication of the Scripture, when themselves must needs depend on a dozen or twenty *Ministers* (if there were so many imploy'd in their Translation) for the very Text it self, whose either understandings or wils might be defective, according to their own Maxim; so that we rely on the whole Church; they, poor abus'd people, on what they neither think infallible, nor certain, nor probable, but as far as they please.

Uncle. I will find a time to satisfie your fears of my diminishing the Scriptures authority; and shew you how all I have said fixes no prejudice on the lawfull and intended use thereof: and if I chance to forget, pray put me in mind before we part. For the present I will propose you another difficulty,

SECT. 7.

Whether the very rehearsing of anothers words, beget not a variety and incertainty?

And

And let us suppose the original Writer himself assist at the translation; As if our Saviour having spoken in Hebrew or Syriack, the Evangelist inspir'd by the Holy Ghost, be to express his words in Greek or Latin, the exception we make being grounded in the very nature of divers languages, and therfore unavoydable by any Art or Industry; will it not clearly follow, that even the original copy, written By the Evangelists own hand, contains not, in rigor, the true and self-significant words of our Saviour, but rather a Comment or Paraphrase explicating and delivering the sense thereof. Nay, let him have written in the same language, and punctually set down every syllable; yet they that are conversant in noting the changes or meanings in words, will tell you, the severall accents in pronouncing them, the turning the speakers head or body this or that way, the allusion to some person, or precedent discourse; and a hundred such circumstances, may so alter the sense of the words, that they will seem quite different in writing, from what they were in speaking. Whence you may collect how negligently and inconsiderately we use to press Texts, as the proper & identicall words of our Saviour; finding them registred in the Gospel: which, in rigor, are but an imperfect expression, or equivocal paraphrase what He deliver'd; the weakness of mans speech bearing no greater exactnes. And surely all experienc'd men, but especially dispurative Scholars (who every day find ways to explicate the plainest passages of an Author in a quite different sense) will tell you, that to seek unanswerably to convince a truth out of bare and dead words, is to put your self into a wild and dark labyrinth,

and to promise a lasting and steady faith on so uncertain principles, were as unperformable an engagement, as to fix the Camelions colours in the current of the water. Now, *Cousin*, having sufficiently told you my mind concerning the Text it self; let us go farther, and look into

SECT. VIII.

The incertainty caused by equivocation, unavoidably incident to all writings.

AND to proceed more clearly, we will suppose for the present, there is but one authenticall copy of Scripture, written in some one language, abstracting so from all varieties of *Texts*, by translations, errors, or any such accident; and meerly considering what of necessity follows from this, that the *Scripture is a Book written in words of men:* and whether in this supposition, there can be any decisive and decretory sense, evidently and certainly, gather'd out of it, Tell me then, *Cousin*, is it an ease matter to decide controversies *by words?*

Nephew. I know words are but signes of what is in our thoughts, set and ordain'd to that end by the will of man; and so divers men signifying their minds by divers signs, come to make divers languages. And that though we ordinarily hang up a Bush to signifie there's Wine to be sold; yet in another countrey perhaps some other sign may say, *This is a Tavern*, and a Bush have a quite different sense: And thus in two languages may one word have severall meanings, and severall words the same. And if these two Nations happen to joyn in one, or have much commerce together, by use and custom,

ſtom, this word may come to bear two ſignifications, even in the ſame language, and ſo breed an ambiguity what ſenſe is to be taken; which I conceive is called *Equivocation*. Since then there is no other ground for either of theſe ſignifications, but *Mans will*, whoſe inward thoughts are eaſily diſguis'd, I ſee not how the truth can be certainly known.

Uncle. You ſay well; for, the interpretation of words, depending thus abſolutly on the inconſtant will of man, and on cuſtom, ſubject to continuall change, muſt neceſſarily be very mutable and incertain. Now theſe ſignifications arbitrarily impos'd on the ſame word, happen to be eqnivocall, either by chance, as you have already declared (which indeed reaches not to many words, but is caſual, as the cauſe of it is) or on ſet purpoſe, and that ſometimes for want of words, ſometimes by deſire of elegance and variety in our expreſſions. And this belongs to almoſt all the words we have; for there is ſcarce any but may be ſo uſed: and, if it may be, it is ſo one time or other. The ſeverall wayes of interpreting words are, in Logick ſaid (by thoſe who reckon feweſt) to be eight: for ſome make no end of multiplying the ſorts of them, and under the name of Equivocation, or Analogy, much confound all Scholaſticall Learning.

As for the cuſtom and uſe of words, the variety of times, and qualities of perſons, are very conſiderable: For, in ſeverall ages the ſelf-ſame word may have ſeveral ſenſes; whence it is, that thoſe who write of Eloquence, give words their periods of birth and death: And yet far greater is the difference betwixt the phraſes of

the Court, University, or great Cities, and the speech of remoter parts and villages. Nay, you shall find that as languages in general are the institution of a multitude of men, so almost every one is Master, and, as it were, founder of some particular expressions not common to others: whereby some declare themselves more exactly and plainly, others more confusedly and ambiguously: insomuch that Criticks curious in ancient Writings, will attribute or derogate certain Works from Authors, on this onely ground. And now in such an ancient Writing as the Scripture is, how many ambiguities may grow from all these Principles? Or rather, what certainty can be had out of such multiplicity of incertitudes? But I had almost forgotten to ask your opinion, Whether 'tis possible a Language should be entirely conserved in written Books, which still remain the same?

Nephew. Why not? if there be books enough: for then all the words of that language may be found in them, in all their senses; and so I think the language cannot perish.

Uncle. Your answer is partly true, but not sufficient; you being to consider whether so many Books of one language may have been conserved: For, if the Country be of a final extent, few will be written in that tongue, and if it be a language dispersed through many Nations, it will have its proper Dialects for every Province. So that, books being written for the subjects, and not for the words, (as Dictionaries and phrase-books are) onely so much of the language will be conserv'd, as is necessary for the understanding of those bookes, which by their self-excellence gain esteem, and by their cre-

credit continuance. Wherefore, neither all books that are written, nor, (if we judge by these of our time) any notable part will descend to posterity; nor if they should, will the whole language be contained in them? and if part of the language be lost, of necessity the conserv'd part must be imperfect, by the mistake of such words as are rarely found, and onely guest at by the rest, which make up the sense with them. And all these ambiguities lye purely in the bare words, not yet placed in construction.

Nephew. You forget *Uncle*, the distinction of cases, numbers, moods, tenses, and persons in every language, which contribute very much to the prevention of Equivocation.

Uncle. True; they are made to take away equivocation; but, you shall finde, sometimes the want, sometimes the confused or unexact use, but most of all their excessive abundance (which makes the abuse more frequent) intangles the sense in strange and unextricable ambiguities. As for the languages wherein the Scripture was primitively written, every one has its particular difficulty. The Hebrew observes eight moods wholly different from any of either Greek or Latin, each of them varying the sense in that tongue, as much as the active and passive voice in these. The Greeks have seven tenses, all of several significations; and of numbers, genders, persons, three a peece. The Latin six cases; whence continually arise new occasions of Equivocation almost in every syllable, and consequently great obscurity and doubtfulness must attend any sense relying on bare words: And yet for brevity sake, I have omitted half of what the matter gives me scope to say: the Scripture being;

being originally written in more languages, of which some have more variety, then any I have expres'd.

For construction, you may first conceive, the very pointing and accenting of words begets many doubts and Equivocations; a divers *comma* or *virgula* turning sometimes, the sense quite another way. Secondly, that word which is construed with another to clear its signification, is sometimes it self of equal ambiguity. Thirdly, in the same line, it may happen the same word repeated will have divers senses: concerning which criticisms and niceties your Grammer and Oratory Masters, write whole volumes of precepts. And above all, there is an equivocation in the most vulgar and familiar expressions, rising from a kinde of custome depending on particular times and places: which the compilers of the civil law thought of so great importance, that they judg'd it necessary to make a special book *de usu & interpretatione verborum*; and that for the commonest words then in use. These reasons, unavoidable in any language, by humane industry, are more then sufficient to establish our great Conclusion, that, Tis impossible to demonstrate any thing out of bare dead words; and therefore, who undertakes such a task, considers not what he attempts.

Nephew. If all this be true you tell me, I wonder with what face any dare pretend to convince points of Controversies, so clearly out of Scripture; for surely, they must either be proud ignorant dunces, not understanding what is proof and what not; or else prevaricating miscreants, counterfeiting what their hearts believe not, and presuming our learned men upable or unwilling

unwilling to diſcover the folly of their enterpriſe.

Uncle. Your blood is too hot, *Nephew*: but if you ſaid, only, ſuch as promiſe themſelves victory, with ſo much confidence, in this caſe, are raſh and unadviſed, I ſhould think you wrong'd them not. For the truth is, there's none but are ſo, in their meaſure: And where intereſt or affection is joyn'd to ſome little apparence, which the firſt ſight of the Text affords; preſently a great impreſſion is made. Tis true in ſo grave and important a buſineſs they ought to be more ſtayd; but he whoſe conſcience acquits him from all raſhneſs in judgeing his neighbours, (even in matters of conſequence) let him caſt the firſt ſtone, for me. I will leave them to themſelves, and lead you on to ſee, we are not yet at an end, but farther

SECT. 9.

That there riſes an incertainty, out of this, That the Scripture was written in tongues now ceaſed.

FOr, not onely the languages in which the holy Scripeures were pen'd, do, of their owne nature, breed great ambiguity in the Text; but alſo, that they are now extinct: the knowledge of them being not common and univerſal, but reſtrained to ſome particular Students, and among them, in many paſſages, very much controverted. And, of theſe diſputes among our famous linguiſts, none can be ignorant; the number of Criticks, in this age, and the multitude of their volumes giving ſo ſufficient a teſtimony. Nay, they will tell you, that an exact and skilful know-

knowledge in this matter of Criticism is a necessary quality for all those, who profess the study or interpretation of Scripture. And yet, God knows, on what slight grounds they proceed, what weak guesses are their judgements, how full of quarrels and mistakes; so that a wise and judicious eye sees nothing but variety of disputes upon meer conjectural probabilities. And nevertheless, yourshall have them cry out, *run to the fountain, seek out the spring head, look into the Original texts*; not considering, that as the waters are there weakest, so are their arguments.

I could tell you also, It sometimes happens that, such as are imployed in the Translations of these ambiguous Originals, let pass certain places in their Translations (which I could cite) against their owne judgement, to comply with the will of their patrons, and higher powers, whom they dare not resist. But indeed, their principles in themselves, are so incertain, that the best and wisest of them will confess they have been often mistaken; and not stick to change their mindes sometimes, even in such points where they thought they had the greatest evidence their art could afford. What think you then (*dear Cozen*) would become of Christian faith, if it were onely to relye on such a weak foundation? Yet all these difficulties inevitably follow, if the most substantial points of Christian Religion must have their onely warrant and decision from the bare written Word; and all controversies be still agitated by places of Scripture, and never concluded by a definitive sentence. Were it not too tedious, I would let you see the ambiguity of divers particular languages, wherein several parts of the Scripture

are

are said to have been originally delivered; but I will onely tell you, in a word,

Sect. 10.

What incertainty follows from the Hebrew and Greek tongues; wherein the Scripture was written.

First therefore, the Hebrew has two proprieties very considerable: one, that it is thought to be the shortest language in the world; the other, that it is the most eloquent. For the first, it consists chiefly in the writing of the words, and the scarcity of books. In writing, all the vowels are supposed, not expressed in the Original copies; but onely conserv'd by memory, and to memory we must trust for them. I confess they are, now, express'd by points; in which there are great and frequent mistakes; their Rules being very incertain, and so much the more in that both the rules and the practise of them varie according to the diversity of the countries where the Jewes were dispersed. The reason of their writing without points, I conceive was, because their vowels, being, at first, but five, by making long and short, grew to be more; and so, the first figures of them to stand onely for the *Consonant* use of some Vowels, or else to have no sound. But, whatever the origin was, the effect must necessarily be a great obscurity and doubtfulness in the language; the Vowels, though fewer, yet, in use, approaching very near the number of the Consonants. Besides, the words are al of one or two syllables, and con-

consequently very like one another; which is also increased, by the nearness of diverse of their letters. So that, both their Pronunciation and writing, being easily mistakable, brings a great disorder and confusedness into the language. This is likewise augmented by the want they have of Conjunctions and Prepositions; which not being of a sufficient number, make the construction many times equivocal.

For the scarcity of Books, you may well believe it, if you but know that the legitimate Hebrew is wholly contained in the old Scripture, whereof some parts were not written in Hebrew, and, if you saw their Bible, in a letter bigger then our little Latin character, you would say it is a very small volumn. Whatever is written in Hebrew, besides, is not warrantable to explicate the Text: the Rabbins affecting many diversities, as well in words and stile, as in writing. Nay perhaps, I might add, that the characters themselves have been wholly chang'd since the beginning, and that it is credibly reported, they were once lost, and restored only by the memory of *Esdras*. Thus have we the least assurance of this language that, almost can be of any, not entirely extinguish't.

For the propriety of the Hebrew's Eloquence, it consists chiefly in Figures, Translations, and Number. Figures or *Schems* are the highest part of proper Rhetorick; because they contain the greatest force and sway that words can give to our Appetite: and, if they be rightly apply'd, carry away the Auditor, even against his will, to a strong and suddain action. These, although the Prophets use them more perfectly, then ever any Poet or Orator, yet they cause not much obscu-

rity;

rity; unleſſe when they are ſet down by way of Dialogue: which form of expreſſion, where it is intended in Scripture, is very hard to diſcern. However they are a convincing proof, that who uſes them much, means not his writings ſhould be Dogmatical and deciſive. Tranſlations or Metaphors are ſo frequent cauſes of darkneſſe and ambiguity, that Poets, who chiefly delight in ſuch Flouriſhes, are not to be read, (till after much exerciſe and acquaintance in them) without ſtudy and pains. Nor do any Greek or Latin examples ſhew that ſtrength, which the Scripture has in this kind. The Number or Cadence, (which you would think could not be ſuſpected of any ſuch objection) is often occaſion of great ambiguity: For the Hebrews, being wholly given to harmony in their Scripture, have ſo many accents of divers effects, whereof one many times ſtands for another, or is like it in figure, that you had need of an *Ariadne* to lead you through. Some of their accents are Grammatical, ſome Rhetorical, ſome Muſical, and as much a-do with them as with the reſt of the words: nothing being more difficult then to know when it is one Accent, when another, or when it hath this effect, when that.

He therefore that has recourſe to the Hebrew Text for preciſe and convincing deciſions, does like one who upon a challenge, finding himſelf unskilfull at his weapon, chuſes for the hour of his combat a moonleſs midnight, when the skill of his enemy cannot prejudice him.

Nephew. Such a Duelliſt, I think, proceeds wiſely: for the queſtion being, not of Fencing but Valour, his enemies Art would be no diſadvantage to him. But yet I cannot commend him

him that relyes on the obscurity of the evidence for the decision of a title, unless he suspect himself in the wrong: and then, peradventure, his wit may deserve the applause of managing a bad cause, as well as it will bear.

Uncle. It is sufficient for me you are satisfied, this is not the way to clear the Truth. To the Greek Text then, which I confesse is nothing so ambiguous as the Hebrew; yet has it two defects. One, that it wants those sense-varying conjugations, by which the Orientall languages expresse themselves: the other, that, by abundance, or rather, superfluity of unprofitable varieties, it is both hard to learn, and equivocal in sense; the same word signifying diversly, either through the multitude of Dialects, or different applications of Authors; so many with so great diversity of fancies, having written in several Countries, not depending one on another. Their Prepositions, both in construction and composition, are irregular, changing, somtimes, the sense of the primitive so extravagantly, that meer conjecture is all our guide: the word, if common, being very often used in far differing senses; if rare, its meaning must be gathered out of somthing adjacent.

Nephew. Here is enough, *Uncle*, of this verball and Grammaticall stuff. I will now put you in mind of your promise, to instruct me for what end the Scripture was left to the Church, since it is so apparently unfit to be a Judg in Controversies?

Uncle. I will perform that presently, but first I have one observation more to give you; which, because I see you are half weary, I shall abridge into few words, and briefly shew you,

That

SECT. 11.

That the very nature of the Books of Scripture are not fit to decide Controversies.

SUppose, *Cousin*, you were to give a law in writing, which should last for many Ages, and be observ'd in many Countries, how would you cause it to be written? I mean not for the language, but for the frame of the work, and for the manner or method of the delivery of it.

Nephew. I professe not my self able to compose Rules of Government: yet according to the example of ours, and the Civill laws (and I imagine the like in other Nations) it were, me thinks, to be done thus. I would first cause the most common things to be commanded; then, by degrees, descend to particulars: still observing that several matters should be under several chapters, or divisions, and not one piece here, another there: every chapter containing all things necessarily belonging to that subject. Farther, I would distinguish the degrees of commands, by the degrees of penalties and rewards: And, if any thing were fit, partly to be declared, partly to be left to discretion, I would express so much, that there might be no mistake. As for the stile, I would endeavour to make it the most proper and exact that possibly I could. explicating to my power, all ambiguous phrases, and declaring in what sense they were to be taken, cutting off every superfluous word which might any way confound or prolong the sentences, without necessity. In fine, I would labour to make it the most ordinary, the most plain, and the most short that my wits could contrive: and

and then, according as I observe, these Rules, I should think to perform my task.

Vncl. You would make a good Statesman. And since Reason teaches you this, will it not also tell you, that, if the Author of Reason himself were to give a Law, he would certainly follow some such method, in a most perfect degree? Which, if in any book he has not done, will not the same reason assure you, his intention was not *that Book* should be a Judging Law: Let us then see, whether these conditions be observed in the Scripture: for if we find it has them not, this Controversie is clearly at an end; because it will evidently follow, God never ordained it for that purpose, but to some other intention, and consequently it were as ridiculous to seek the decision of controversies out of the Bible, as to cut with a Beetle, or knock with a Straw.

Dividing, therefore, the holy Scripture, you shall find the Books of the Old Testament (except *Deuteronomy*, which contains the Old Law, with much intermixture of History) are either Historical, Oratorical, Poetical, or Philosophicall: The three first are excluded by their very names, from the qualities & conditions of a Law instituted for the deciding quarrels, though some command may be occasionally inserted. The Phylosophical Books touch little upon our Controversies; because they are either morall Instructions for life and conversation among our neighbours, or treat only of such points as we and all our adversaries agree in.

But indeed there is a main reason against the whole Text of the Old Law, that it was given personally to one people, and no further belong'd to the world, then, in vertue of the dictates

ſtates of Nature, they were obliged to obedience. So that whoever will argue out of the Old Teſtament, muſt firſt prove the command Natural; and then he needs not produce any Text for it.

The New Teſtament is Hiſtorical, Epiſtolar, or Myſtical; which both by their names & natures diſclaim all ſuch exactneſſe as, of neceſſity is required to a Judging Law; they being all pen'd on ſpeciall occaſions, and for particular ends: many paſſages repeated, many left out in one, which are found in another, ſcarce any one knowing of the others writing. Both in the Epiſtles and narrative parts, the contents are expreſſed as was fit for their capacity to whom they were written, or before whom the recited ſpeech was made: circumſtances far different from what is convenient and accommodated to our underſtandings now. And as a wiſe Statſman ſays of Hiſtory, becauſe it relies on ſo many circumſtances, and ſome even of ſmalleſt moment; he that gouerns himſelf by it, muſt certainly be often miſled: ſo in our caſe the want of Knowing circumſtances, and not comprehending the true meaning of what was written in a particular occaſion, will unavoydably make us apt to take our aim amiſs.

The miſtical Book, which we call the *Apocalips*, being a pure Allegory, is the moſt improper of all. This, in my judgement, is ſo evident, that if any of common ſenſe, would but reflect and really conſider what is requiſite to determine a litigious controverſie betwixt two parties paſſionately engaged in their opinions, he would never ſay, Scripture is a book either intended by Almighty God, or in it ſelf any way fit for ſuch a purpoſe. Beſides, ſhould you look into the ſeve-

ral disposítions of mens understandings, but especially of their wills; and consider the strange variety and multiplicity of their interests and passions; you would soon despair of finding two, in two thousand, who, left to their own liberty, will agree in the interpretation of any Law, how plain soever, where both are oppositely concern'd. And as these prejudices of interest and passion are, for the most part, publickly noted in every one: yet sometimes they hide themselves so secretly, that even he who protests and swears himself most free from them, is the most dangerously entangled. But if we put this law to be supernatural and divine, full of mystical and sublime commands, to which nature gives not the least rise to elevate our minds; but we must wholly and precisely rely on *Authority, and captivate our understandings to the obedience of faith*; and this in points the most obscure and seemingly contradictory that can be imagined: shall we in such circumstances maintain, that every one is to gather this law, and glean the knowledge of it, as well as he can, out of Scripture alone, so full of ambiguity? So expos'd to infinite unanswerable exceptions? should it not first be proved, that the Bible was made & intended for this end? should it not first be prov'd, that its frame and structure is contriv'd and accommodated to such a design? which how possible it is to perform, let any indifferent and unpassionate determine. Whereas, to remit the decision of all disputes in Religion to living judges, is more efficatious, more suitable to nature and discretion, more conformable to the practise of our forefathers, and the principles of common sense and reason.

Nephew. Hereafter I shall never think the Scripture

pture was given for a judge of controversies: Since, to make so large a Book, and mingle so many things unappertaining to the substance of our belief, so many very remotely connexed to it; and then leave all to a meer conjecture, what may be the meaning of the words, plainly argues some other intention in the Writer, then to set down a standing and authentical Text to decide quarrels: And when I hear the Protestants say, *A plain passage clears an obscure*, I can as easily reply, That an obscure passage darken's a clear, and then we are even. Wherefore I long to know for what use the Scripture was made.

Uncle. Have yet a little patience, *Cousin*, and make a short & quick reflection upon some chief points anciently controverted in the Church of God, As, by the *Arrians*, how a spiritual and indivisible Essence, such as God is, could have a naturall Son. By the *Anti-Trinitarians* and *Sabellians*, how the same indivisible thing could be three persons. By the *Nestorians* and *Eutychians*, how one Person could subsist in two natures. By the *Pelagians*, how God's foreknowledge and predestination could stand with Merits and Free-wil. By the *Iconoclasts*, how the Catholick use of Images tended to and ended in the Archetype. By the *Beringarians*, how a natural body can have corporal presence, otherwise then by its quantity. By our *Wickleffists*, how all things are not govern'd by a fatal necessity. And all these renew'd by the liberty and confusion of our last ages. Consider the subtilty of these questions, how they are above nature and beyond our comprehension; how the truths of these disputes are like the passage of *Scylla* and *Charibdis*, limitted betwixt two errours, so narrowly,

ly, that, when they are spoken of at large and not dogmatically, (especially before they are examined, or some mistrust of opposition have made a warinesse) it is almost impossible the Speaker should be so just and streight in his language, as not give occasion to one, who comes after him, to pretend his favour for either opinion.

Consider farther, that wrangling wits (such as for the most part they are who first begin a new faction in the Church) have this property; that they reduce their questions by little and little to logical and abstracted notions, and force the Catholiks to follow them, if they will not desert their ancient truths; so that, after a while, one knows not where the controversie lyes. For example, *Simon Magus*, and the first authors of our last Breaches, preached *that faith did, so, justifie, that good works were not necessary*: now, their followers, draw the question to this, *whether Faith or Charity be the Form of Justification*, which is almost pure Logick.

If an *Arrian* come and tell you, the Scripture sayes, *Pater major est me*, and therefore *Christ Jesus* was not truly God, nor consubstantial to his Father (the same argument holds in the rest of these heresies; and even in all the most substantial and fundamental points of Christian faith) A Catholike maintains the contrary, and cites the text *Ego & pater unum sumus*: is it possible any rational man should expect questions so sublime and mystical can be diffinitively resolved, by a critical libration of dead and uncertain words, full of equivocal ambiguity; their sense and meaning lying in the brest of him, who is not to be found, but deceas'd many ages since? And if they cannot, (as it is more then evident) shall

shall we think *Christ Jesus* has established no Means, no Authority on earth, to take up these quarrels, and decide these Controversies? Shall matters of such importance for ever remain a perpetual subject of endlesse dissention? Shall the Catholick Church and Christian Religion be torn and rent in pieces, even in what is most substantial and fundamental (for still I say the like may be urged against what point soever) at the will and pleasure of every privat fancy, and no power ordained to prevent such essentiall and eternall disorders? If this be not to ruine and overthrow all Government and Religion, and introduce all confusion and Atheism, both common sense and reason fails me. Put this liberty (of believing only what he thinks he finds in Scripture) into some one head to whom the sharpness of wit, and elocution, and perhaps a seeming good life has given authority (though truly his spirit be govern'd by a secret pride, or other interest or indignation) and see if he be not able to draw a great multitude, even *the third part of the stars* after him: especially if he preach liberty either of mind or body, and have the hand of some Prince, full of rewards and punishments, to second his intentions. Calculate what the industry of such a form'd party, heartily cleaving together, is not able to invent. Some have found ways to cast mists even upon Mathematicks, and the most certain principles of Nature: Laying then those qualities of Scripture, I have told you, to the disposition of those factious persons; what evidence think you can be expected from the conflicts of such disputants proceeding on such grounds?

Nephew. Trouble your self no further in this point; I cannot but acknowledge your evi-

dence far greater then I could hope or desire. Wherfore pray be pleased to inform me.

SECT. 12.

How points of Religion may be decided by Scripture.

Uncle. First, tell me then, *Cousin*, do you see the wall before you, some four or five yards distant from your eye? and how much of it can your sight reach at once?

Neph. I see it perfectly well, it is white, foure Pictures hang on it, and half a dozen Chairs stand against it. To say precisely how much falls within one view, perhaps may pose me: but in a short turning of my eye I can easily run over it all.

Uncle. Pray go within a span of it, and tell me what difference you find.

Neph. I find now the compasse of my sight much lessen'd, but that which I see, and which lies directly before me, I can discern far better, distinguishing exactly every little part in it, and of what colour it is.

Uncle. Did you not say the wall was white? how comes it to passe you tell me now, you see what colour every part of it is?

Neph. It seem'd all white before, whilst I was a good way from it; but when I came neer, I perceiv'd some little parts dun, others brown, & the like: but sure the white exceeded the rest.

Uncle. Then, *Cousin*, you may think you discern'd not perfectly the colour of the wall before: for it must needs be of the same colour with the parts, and you say they are not of one, but many: so you onely saw the colour of those parts which by their excesse drown'd all the rest. And if you lookt on any of those little spots through a multiplying Glasse, you would there discover as great difference of parts, and peradventure

venture of colours too, as you did in the wall when you were within a span of it: so that if you were ask'd what you had seen, you would hardly quit your self handsomly of the question. Notwithstanding you perceive well enough, that the first sight of the wall serves you for all the uses of your life; as, not to run against it, and generally to know how to comport your self, or dispose such things as were requisite to be set towards it, or in any manner to be don about it. The second view helps onely to know the nature of the wall, and distinguish what is mixed in it, of what ingredients it is composed, or the like. Which abundantly evinces this usefull truth, that the easier and more common knowledge of any thing suffices for the direction of our lives; the more particular and exact inspection is onely required, either for the content of the knower, or for some speciall practice of the thing known.

Neph. I believe I can guesse already whither you intend to carry me: for you will shew me two ways of understanding Scripture; one large and broad, taking it in grosse, and by the lump, as we hear a discourse, or Play, which pleasingly passes on, without any great demur, or particular weighing of every word: The other more curious and exact, looking into every little propriety, that may breed the least diversity: and I suppose you would conclude that this second belongs only to Scholars, but the former guides the life, and governs the actions of mankind. For the people are ordinarily carried away by their Preachers, as ancient Commonwealths were by their Orators. And I have often observ'd, on what subject soever, an eloquent & elaborate discourse that runs sweetly and fluently, charms the

ears of the Auditory, and presently gains their suffrages. Whence I must confess if the end for which Scripture was ordain'd be any thing belonging to mans life and conversation, it must be compassed by this gross, common, and ordinary course of reading and understanding it: wheras he that should nicely examine every word would not finde ground to fix himself with advantage or satisfaction. Is not this your meaning?

Uncle. Very right, and surely if we look into what is necessary in the Scripture for our good life and vertuous conversation, we shall perceive plainly tis to be had this way: As the direction of our lives and actions to God, acknowledging all from him, comfort in adversity, moderation in prosperity, compassion of the afflicted, helping of the needy, Rewards of vertue, punishments of vice, examples of both, and in a word, the motives of the love of God and our neighbour, and of the contempt of the world. Nor is any so blind as not to see all these are easily found in the Bible by a sensible, common, and discreet reading it; though perhaps, by a rigorous and precise ballancing every particular syllable, they may vanish away we know not how. But to come yet closer to our purpose, would this manner of reading Scripture make a perfect beleiver and a Catholick? Which is as much as to ask

SECT. 13.

How Scripture can determine Controversies?

Nephew. How should I know that, unless I were able to prove my Religion out of Scripture; or at least to give a judgement of all that is there written? which is beyond my capacity.

Uncle. Then I will help you, there are two wayes

wayes of making a Catholick, or a true and perfect believer: one, by shewing every point of our faith in particular; and this I dare not affirm our common and ordinary fashion of reading or hearing Scripture is able to effect; for we see they who write of controversies alledge but few places, and even those not unavoidable, for some points of Catholick doctrine. Nor is it to be expected; because there appearing no prohibition to improve in some sort the instruction of the faithful, and man's nature being still inclin'd to add to what is already learned (whence it is all Arts grow compleat by degrees & long practise) no marvail if the œconomy of the Church, and a few such other things, which the oppressed Primitive Christians could not bring to perfection, cannot in particular be shown in Scripture. But shall, therefore, I know not who, rise up and cry out Idolatry, Superstition, Abomination, and make a Schism to destroy them? what can be condemned for faction and rebellion, if this be commended for reformation.

The other meanes to make a Catholick is by some common Principle: as if by reading the Bible we meet with nothing contrary to the Catholike Tenet or practise, which our Adversary calls in question; or finde it commended there in general, or the authors and observers prais'd and extol'd: And in this way I doubt not but a discreet and diligent perusal of Scripture at large, will make any true student of it, a perfect believing Catholike; so he proceed with indifferency, and a mind rather to know Scripture, then look for this or that point in it. But then, *Cozen*, how comes it to pass, that if by an exact and minute examination of the Texts these truths cannot be convinced; yet by a common &

superficial reading they may? since tis impossible that should be in the sum, which is not in the Particulars.

Nephew. I am sure there's the same difficulty in the divers sights of the wall, the experience of which is so fresh in my memory: but to yeild a good reason either of the one or the other, is beyond my understanding.

Uncle. Have you not observ'd an invention of the Architects, who can so dispose pillars in a gallery, that, setting your eye in a certain position, you shall see the figure of a Man or a Beast, and walking along the gallery to go to it, it vanishes away, and you discover nothing but naked pillars? Or have you not lookt into a silinder of Glass, before which if you lay certain papers full of blotted dashes, and careless lines, you shall discern the picture of a mans face reflected from it? Just so it happens in the understanding: For the art of these devises is, to make certaine parts come so together to the eye, that others, either by situation, or some accident, remain hidden; and then the appearing parts being seen alone, exactly represent the intended shape; and far exceeding the rest in quantity, they keep the whole possession of the eye, in sight, and of the understanding, in reading. Hence it is that this common manner of using Scripture is more secure, then the minute and precise ballancing of every phrase and syllable. For neither the variety of Translations, nor errours of copies, nor difficulties of languages, nor mutability of words, nor multiplicity of the occasions and intentions of the Authors, nor the abundance of things written, nor different framings of the books (all which are causes of incertainty in a rigorous examina-

amination) have any such power to break the common and ordinary sense of the writer in general, as we every day find by experience.

Hence also it is, the Fathers prest Scripture against the Hereticks of their times, partly forced to it, because Hereticks generally admit no other proofs; but chiefly by reason their works are diffuse and oratorical, befitting people used to publick Declamations and sermons, as the Greeks and Romans were; divers of the Fathers themselvs being train'd up to that kind of learning. Wherfore you shall have them cite many places, some proper, some Allegorical, some common, all, sometimes, avoidable if taken separately, but the whole discourse more or less forcible, according to the natural parts or heavenly light communicated more to one then to another: yet still in the proportion of Oratours who speak to the multitude, and not to *Socrates* or *Crysippus*. And thus the Scripture was a fit weapon for them; and the Churche's continuing in their doctrine shews they manag'd it dexterously, and as it ought, with relation to, and dependance on Tradition.

Nephew. Then, must all arguments out of Scripture concerning religion, be laid aside; For if no certainty can thence be gather'd in a decisive and definitive way, to what purpose should we either aledg, or admit it in controverfies? at least oblige me with your instructions

SECT. 14.

What laws are requisite for disputation out of Scripture?

Uncle. I am far from any dislike of arguing out of Scripture; so it be done with fit and suitable conditions, such as may bring the mat-

ter to a conclusion, settle unity and peace in all the world.

The first rule I would have a Catholike observe is, not to dispute with Protestants, unless they promise to prove their position evidently and manifestly. For, since the Catholick knows there may be certain witty probabilities and hard places of Scripture brought against him; it were madness in him to leave his ancient beliefe, Custome (the best interpreter of laws) standing clearly for it, and the practise of the Church (the surest teacher how to understand that text it self delivers) being absolutely on his side: it were meer folly in a Catholick to quit his *Tenet* and accept of another, onely on a probable interpretation; his own being confirm'd by that practise, which makes it more then probable. For, Protestants must needs plead against possession; since at the first breaking, when they assum'd to themselves the uncontrolable power of reforming the Church, without doubt she was actually possest of those Doctrines which they pretended to take away, and of that sense of Scripture which they undertook to rectifie: and certainly, no man of common sense, who finds himself in quiet possession, and has the law in his owne hands, will yeild it up without evidence on the contrary part.

The second Rule I desire a Catholick should observe, is, not to think all lost, because himself cannot answer the arguments proposed against him, nor to venture his cause, and the great advantage of immemorial possession upon his owne wit. For the disputation being on a subject, wherein, according to Protestant grounds, there is no perfect certainty; it follows that who has the better brain, or is more practised in this kind

kind of quarrelling, may bring an argument a good Schollar cannot solve at first sight; though afterwards either he or some other may discover the fallacy. And what a folly were it to hazard soul and conscience on a meer subtilty or sudden flash of wit; whereof peradventure, within an hour himself will plainly see the falsity, and condemn his own error? Wherefore a Catholick is not to stake the whole cause on his own head, nor confess it weak because he cannot defend it: for both himself may improve his skill, and some other perhaps be able to sustain it far more strongly then he.

The third Rule is, that Catholikes never undertake to convince their Adversarie out of Scripture; but content themselves that the words insisted on may well bear that sense, which is in favour of them: and this is both more easie to perform, and abundantly sufficient for their purpose: They having an assured ground of their faith, besides the Bible, and which relyes not on it; nay, holding, that their Religion cannot be wholly convinced out of the written word, to what end (unless for gallantry and to shew wit) should they undertake to prove their Tenets, by Scripture? For this were to strengthen their opponent in his own ground and principle, that all proof is to be drawn from the Bible.

Nephew. You would bind Protestants to very unequal conditions, if you oblige them to convince, and the Catholick not; nay that it shall be sufficient for the Catholike to shew *this may be* the meaning of this or that place of Scripture, whereas the Protestant shall be forced to prove clearly and evidently *this is* the very sense of the Text.

Uncle. Not I, *Cozen*, but the Protestants oblige

themſelves to this hard meaſure. For if I ſhould ſtrongly maintain a Beetle were the beſt inſtrument, to cut with, and you deny it; were not I bound to cut with a Beetle,& were it not unreaſonable to ſay, you ſhould be forc'd to do it, ſince you maintain it impoſſible? So they, who hold the Scripture is the true judge of controverſies, and fit and able to decide all quarrels and diſſentions about the Chriſtian faith, bind themſelves, by admitting this principle, to convince their poſitions out of the written text, which cannot be exacted at his hands, who ſaith Scripture was neither made, nor is ſufficient for that end. Look upon *Luther* and the Hereticks of his time, nay upon the Puritans of our dayes, and ſee if they do not all maintain, that they can clearly convince their Tenets by expreſs words of Scripture; and ſay that our fore-Fathers were wholly ignorant of the Bible, and that we, now living, know nothing of it. But to go on with our rules of diſputing out of Scripture.

The fourth condition ſhall be, that the Catholick admit not any negative proofs; as, to conclude, *This is an errour, becauſe you can ſhew no Scripture for it.* For that is no argument, unleſs they ſuppoſe nothing true but the Bible, or to be done but what's ordain'd in it, which were extreamly abſurd; for neither Catholick, nor, I think, any good Proteſtant will receive that ſuppoſition, ſince it not onely takes aſway the power of the Church, but even nature rom it ſelf; for nature teaches us to help ourſelvs where Gods word contradicts not; and as a Puritan ſeeks a pulpit to preach in, or a baſin to baptize with, never looking whether he have a warrant in Scripture to command it; ſo rationall and ſenſible men ſelect a particular habit:

habit for a Priest, whereby his words and exhortations may be receiv'd with greater respect and authority; and this without any written precept: for, as, where Scripture commands, it renders every thing necessary; so, where it is silent, it makes nothing unlawful.

Nephew. If Protestants were to dispute upon these conditions, they would keep off I warrant you. Yet this I must add, it were a great satisfaction to the indifferent and unpassionate, who have been brought up in this verbal respect of the Bible; to see the positions, you would enduce them to embrace, maintainable by it. This perhaps you can perform, by shewing me

SECT. 15.

Another manner of disputing out of Scripture.

Uncle. For their sakes, *Cousin*, I will open to you a way of disputation, where the Protestant shal have no disadvantage but his cause. For I think Catholick Religion may not onely be proved by Scripture, but that, standing exactly and precisely to the written Word, Catholicisme is far more maintainable then Protestancy. I confesse this kind of disputing is not fit for many Auditors, but only persons of moderation and understanding. And it is in effect to state the controversie thus: *Which Religion is more probable, if only Scripture were to be alledged?* This question requires divers suppositions, wherein both sides are to agree, which I fear will be too difficult a task. As, what Texts are to prevail, what Commentaries or Explications to be allow'd, what is a proper, what an improper speech; among the improper, which must be prefer'd, what copies of every Text shall be held for good, what conjectures accounted

accounted null against the naturall sense, and many other such preliminary Queries not so easily resolved. This done, let both sides bring their places for the point in debate, and so the dispute will onely be of the qualification of the places, *Which are more apparent and likely of the two.* And even for this I see so many critical principles first to be setled, that all the Logicks hitherto invented, would not afford sufficient light and instruction to make an evident conclusion which party the Scripture most favoured. And therefore you may guess how far these Bible-disputations are from clearing doubts, what little advantage proceeds of them, unlesse they be well govern'd, and how generally the best credit, or the most eloquent and nimble tongue carries away the day by the Auditors prejudicate opinion or weakness. In a word, the Scripture being not written, for the decision of controversies, we cannot expect it should be, of it self, without the Churches authority, much profitable for that purpose; but to inform our lives by an ordinary reading or preaching, and raise our affections by singing and such like uses, recommended in the very letter it self; whereas we are never sent to the written word to judge and determine our contentions in matters of faith. And now I hope you are fully satisfied.

Nephew. I am; and give you many thanks; for I see how few points soever Protestants pretend to be necessary, yet can there not any one be convinced out of bare words, involving so many incertainties as you have declar'd.

Uncle. It is to little purpose for them to say, some few substantial and necessary Articles may be drawn out of Scripture: it were fitter they would first prove the Scripture an instrument made

made to determine Controverſies; or any other of thoſe Principles, which I ſhew'd you muſt of neceſſity be true, if the Bible be our rule. But this they can never perform; & therefore they ſeek firſt to withdraw us from a ſecure and natural means of relying on our Forefathers (Which nevertheleſs in all Civil & œconomicall converſation themſelves cannot live without) and then leave us to a labyrinth of voluntary and unendable diſputations. Reflect now *Cozen*, on what we have ſaid, & compare our yeſternights and this mornings diſcourſe together: conſidering firſt how many things, are of neceſſity to be conſerv'd in the Church, for preſervation of faith and good life in her ſubjects. After this, caſt up with your ſelf how many points have been & are quarell'd; and if any have eſcap'd, how all the reſt may be cal'd in queſtion, with as much probability & appearance as thoſe; Then examine wel the qualities of that *Decider of controverſies*, whether al the Adverſaries of the catholick Church ſeek to draw us; by which there can be no other end of diſputes but to leave every one to his own will & diſcretion. And out of all conclude that theſe poſitions being admitted, there will neither remain government in the Church, nor certainty or conſtancy in belief, nor any thing to be taught and practiſed worthy God's ſending a Lawgiver; much leſs his own Son, on ſo hard conditions as we apprehend of *Ieſus Chriſt*, and read in the Goſpel.

Neph. Very true; but if you leave me thus, I ſhall be like him, who had forgot his *Pater noſter*, but not learnt his *Our Father*. For you have taught me what I cannot, but not what I ought to relye on; And there is ſo much ſaid againſt the authority of the Church, by all its Adverſaries, that he who has been alwayes beaten to thoſe objections, cannot eaſily leave them without ſome ſcruple.

Uncle.

Uncle. True: the most necessary part is yet behind; for a little building is better and harder then a great deal of pulling down. Therfore when your leisure will permit, I shall be ready to give you satisfaction to the best of my power. But now this morning is too far spent to begin so large a discourse: Take another time, the sooner the more welcome: for the present God be with you, I have some prayers to say.

THE THIRD DIALOGVE.

The Introduction:

Nephew. I am come, *Uncle*, to challenge your promise; for I cannot be quiet till you have settled me in this so important question. If the points now in controversy be of such high and fundamental consequence, and if by Scripture, we cannot decide them against contentious Opposers, either we must seek some other means, or all Religion will be confounded, and the truth of Christ's law wholly neglected. Wherefore I beseech you give me a strong and full resolution in this so concerning a difficulty.

Uncle If this fervour continue, *Nephew*, you will not need be a Schollar long. Pray consider tis a fair day; you never want imployment for the afternoon, when the season invites you to recreation: if I should stay you now, you would, perhaps, so repent it, I should not see you again this month; be not so eager, as to take a surfeit, even of the best fruit.

Neph.

Neph. I fear my own inconſtancy, therefore pray refuſe me not: diſcontinuance may breed coldneſs, eſpecially, if what you have already taught me, ſhould be ſullyed with worſe thoughts, and ſo I be rendred leſs capable of your inſtructions, then I hope I am at this preſent; Which I have very good reaſon to make great eſteem of.

Uncle. Well, if you will have it ſo, you muſt give me leave to trench upon a good part of your Afternoon; for I may be long in this point, and would be loath to break off in the middle. Yet I will proceed with as much brevity as poſſibly I can. Tell me then, had Jeſus Chriſt ever a Church or no? And I would have you anſwer, what you think a judicious Proteſtant would ſay to the ſame demand.

Neph. I doubt not but any Proteſtant of them all would anſwer you, that, at leaſt in the Apoſtles time, Chriſt had a viſible Church, conſiſting of the faithful which adhered to the Apoſtles, and ſuch Biſhops as were made by them; but that ſince it has fallen into great errours, and is either Apoſtated in fundamentals from the true doctrine of Chriſt, or at leaſt ſo corrupted, that a reformation was neceſſary even in points of belief: And this reform their forefathers undertook.

Uncle. You are likewiſe perſwaded, I ſuppoſe *Cozen*, by the ſame evidence, that, in the Apoſtles time, *this Church* was in communion with the particular Church of Rome: and therfore I wil go a little farther, and ask you, whether this Church, wherof the Roman was a part (and peradventure the principal) was not to be obeyed by every privat man, & particular Church; ſhe being the whole, they but members or parts? She having received Chriſts doctrine, and therfore able to teach it; ſhe having received the *Keyes of heaven*, and therefore

who

who *refused to hear her should be estem'd as a Heathen or Publican*; In a word she being the *Spouse of Iesus Christ*, and the Mother of his faithful children?

Nephew. All this is so evident, that certainly neither Protestant or Puritan will deny it. But what do you infer from hence?

Unc. Softly, *Cozen*, I must ask you one question more before I conclude any thing; and it is, What became of this Church when it fell from Christ? I mean, were the men and their governours suddenly extinct, and others of a quite different Religion, rais'd in their places; or did there still continue a publick face and successive government, even in their errors, and so the externall Church remain'd and descended to our dayes, though with corrupt faith and doctrine?

Neph. This all the Protestants that ever I heard acknowledge; nor can I imagin any wil deny it.

Uncle. Then, *Cozen*, we will draw this Conclusion, That *Church*, which is now in communion with the particular Church of Rome, was once the true Church; or, if you had rather say she was but a part of the true Church, so let it be; at least she had the true faith, and every particular man or Church, within her own compass, was oblig'd to obey her, as having those worthy titles you acknowledged, even now to be, then, due to her. But if a Protestant reply, she has since faln and lost those glorious priviledges, how would you convince him? or at leastcan you tell me

SECT. 2.

What force the arguments of Protestants against Catholicks, in this question, ought to have?

Nephew. To convince a Protestant in this point, I would have recourse to Books and learned Doctors, who should maintain the truth, and

and ſhow his poſition to be falſe: for I am not ſo skilful to prove it my ſelf; nor ſo proud to attempt what is above my reach.

Uncle. I hold you no wary gameſter at this play: why ſhould you leave your beſt ward, and put yo ur ſelf on the diſadvantage? I mean, why will you unneceſſarily charge your ſelf to prove the negative, your Adverſary being oblig'd to convince the poſitive? ſince if he confeſs, ours was once the true Church, the preſumption ſtands for us that we are not faln, till he demonſtrates we are. Our Church was once the *Spouſe of Chriſt*, by their one verdict, though now they ſtile her the *Whore of Babylon*, *Erroneous*, and *Adultereſs*: And how, pray *Cozen*, would your ſelf take it, if one ſhould lay ſo foul an imputation on your bed-fellow, without ſufficient evidence to make it good? Certainly *Chriſt Ieſus* will be no leſs offended, to ſee his dear Spouſe (whom he bought and waſhed with his own blood) ſo ſhamefully traduced, without a legitimate cauſe and juſt occaſion: Will he not brand ſuch bold accuſers for infamous and ſacrilegious calumniators? or if they fail of their proof; do they not convict themſelves of the moſt heynous crime that can be imagin'd? And if this Church was erected and inſtituted by God himſelf, for our lawful Lady and true Governeſs, can who they revolt from the loyalty and obedience due to her, (without clear demonſtration of her eſcheat from that throne and dignity) be accounted leſs then traytors and rebells both to God and her? In a word, if ſhe once were *that Church* to whom Chriſt gave the rod of juſtice, and ſent all profeſſors of his name to hear her voice and obey her ſentence, under penalty of her being reputed *Heathens and Publicans*; do not they juſtly deſerve thoſe curſes and ignominious titles,

Hay who

titles, who divide themselves from her, without legal warrant of their separation? Doth not, therfore, common sense conclude, that who ever acknowledges the Roman Communion to have bin the true and lawful Church of Christ, is by this very deed obliged to prove clearly and evidently her fall from that majesty; or else in his owne conscience and judgement, must lyable to those foul and unworthy taints of treason and rebellion, against God and his Church?

Nephew. I confess you speak no parables, nor is there any deep learning required to conceive the evidence of your discourse. Yet I fear you might have spar'd your labour; for there's no Protestant but will easily undertake to prove, that the Roman Church is gone astray; wherein yet if they miscarry, they are irrecoverably undone, their whole Religion being but (as themselves profess) redressing of abuses crept in, and their Divinity no other then to defend their taking upon themselves to reform. And if you would shew their proofs to be insufficient, I suspect it would require a greater scholar then my self to comprehend your reasons.

Uncle. Be not discouraged, but look into the ease, and tell me what kinde of evidence you think Protestants are bound to bring, to free themselves from those heavy censures we spake of? Is it sufficient to alledge such arguments as some Philosophers have invented to prove Snow black? Or such as, by the Art of topicks, a nimble Logician may frame on any subject given him? in which kind, some great Wits have taken pleasure to commend *baldness*, *blindness*, and the like imperfections; others, to contradict manifest truths, as that *there never was any war of Troy*. Nay, do you think it enough that their arguments be only as good, as those the Catholicks bring against

gainſt them: or rather ought they not be *evident* and *unanſwerable* in every indifferent and underſtanding judgment? ſhould they not be ſo clear and convincing, that any unpaſſionate perſon, expert in controverſies, having ſeen what the moſt learned Catholicks can ſay againſt the Proteſtants, muſt nevertheleſs think in his heart they cannot give any ſatisfactory or even plauſible anſwer to their reaſons.

Neph. The plain truth is, If it were my caſe betwixt my wife and my ſelf, I ſhould not think to have correſponded with my loyalty towards her, nor with that care I ow her honor, till I had ventured my life to have his hearts blood, who ſhould wrong her reputation ſo highly, without proof fully as evident as you require. Neither do I believe any Prince or State would account him a loyall ſubject, that conceals or encourages ſuch as diſperſe and ſow in the hearts of the people the like ſuſpitions againſt their Government. 'Tis true, I ſhould be willing to hear of my wives miſdemeanours before they come to that height and evidence, for my own caveat; if (which God forbid) ſhe ſhould prove untrue: But there's a great difference betwixt giving warning of likelihoods and apparences of a miſchief, whereby it may be prevented, and blemiſhing or ſtaining my wifes and my own honour with the deepeſt diſgrace that can fall on ſuch an individual couple. Beſides, I know the bond of love and duty betwixt man and wife, is ſo ſevere and indiſpenſable, that ordinary ſurmiſes ought not to perſwade a breach in ſo ſtrong and ſacred a knot: (the greater and harder effect requiring ſtill a more powerful cauſe; nor can we without folly conceive every proof ſufficient or fit for all caſes.) Certainly no amity nor fidelity could long

long subsist if such principles were suffered to be taught: For how is it possible (human accidents being of themselves so intricate & variable, and the world grown so witty to do mischief) but that every false tongue shal set dissention betwixt the neerest & dearest relations: and even stir up to sedition and mutiny the most faithful subjects against their Prince, if less then moral evidence be admitted to prove matters of so tender and important a consequence? Nor can I believe his Majesty would suffer his Preachers to draw their Pedigree from *Rome*, if he did not perswade himself they were able to bring satisfactory proofs for their relinquishing that Authority: else it were to authorize a rebellion against the Court & State of *Conscience*; which has a greater force and power then pure temporal Allegiance, this being grounded upon oath & duty, both which receive their strength and vertue from Conscience. If therfore you intend to give me full satisfaction in this point you must cleerly evince, that the Protestants arguments are insufficient: which though I doubt not (seeing our men always so ready to buckle with them, even upon most disadvantageous conditions) yet I conceive this cannot be otherwise effected then by experience, bringing them to dispute together.

Unc. Dear *Cousin*, I am glad to hear you discourse so strongly and solidly, it gives me great hopes of your future abilities. But if you wil have patience, your self shal be judge of my question, without recourse to any further learning then common sense: First therefore let us see

SECT. 3.

Whether, standing in likelihood, the Catholick party be greater, more learned, and more vertuous?

SUppose then you had a case in Law of great difficulty, and should consult a dozen or a Coun-

Councellors, reputed the learnedſt of the Realm, or, at leaſt, the unskilfulleſt of them far beyond your knowledge to judge, whether he were not as able as the beſt: And of theſe twenty, ſeventeen or eighteen ſhould ſay, you would infallibly loſe your cauſe, if you took ſuch or ſuch a courſe in it; the other 2 or 3 ſhould, as conſtantly, affirm the contrary, and ſo the whole controverſie be brought to this ſingle queſtion, *Which ſide were more learned and judicious*, to whom would you adhere in theſe circumſtances?

Neph. If you ſuppoſe me unable to judg of their learning & that they be all equally eſteem'd honeſt (though indeed I ſee not how they can come to ſuch obſtinate conteſtation, if they were all as they are repured;) I muſt needs chuſe the multitude, and either take with the 17. or play the fool notoriouſly. And I eaſily conjecture what you aim at, that becauſe Catholick countries are greater then Proteſtants, judgment ought to be given on the Catholicke ſide: But how ſhall I know there are more learned men among Catholicks then among Proteſtants, or that the Catholick Doctors are greater Scholars then the maintainers of the particular *Engliſh* Reformation? 'Tis true, the Proteſtants of other countries are not throughly of the ſame religion with theſe here in *England*; yet I ſee they agree all together againſt us, what private diſcords ſoever they have among themſelves.

Uncle. Your freſh wits run too faſt. Remember you were ſuppoſed ignorant of the proportion of your Advocates abilities in your ſuit of Law; and ſo prudently prefer'd the multitude. Wherefore, as long as it is conſtantly confeſt, there are far more Catholicks then Proteſtants eminently famous for learning, ſo long the lay people unable to judge of ſuch difficulties, muſt ſtand convinced

by

by the number, of which the vulgar know no more, but that they are accounted wise and judicious by those among whom they live, as these are here with us. And to give you further satisfaction in this point, you know, that man for man by all likelihood, Readers of Divinity are the greatest Scholars; their exercise and profession (specially if they be of many years) enabling & improving them more then others who have not the like occasion. Of these compare the number *England* affords, to the multitudes Catholick countries yield. You have been in *Paris*, where you might see perhaps, in one house or College, more then are in all *England*; of which some have taught Divinity 16 or 20 years, many still actually reading: more, who having spent the strength and vigor of their age in that profession, have now given over. I speak no secrets; the most ignorant may see and prove what I say with his own eyes, either in *Italy*, *Spain*, *Germany*, *France*, or *Low-Countries*. Besides, the time one of them spends in study, is double to what the Ministers here in *England* imploy. These being married, must have care of their wives and children, and are, saith Saint *Paul*, *divided*, one half to their books, the other to their household. And indeed Wives are naturally no friends of Books Learning and Children spring both from the brain, both require abundance of spirits, and therefore not well matched together. And sure, among Catholicks, a grave and learned resolution is rather to be lookt for at a Priests hands, (ordinarily speaking) then from a married person, by reason his time, breeding, and imployment are more proportioned to such a performance.

To these learned Divines now living, you may joyn all that went before them for many Ages; not

not ſo unlearned as the Proteſtants perſwade themſelves; ſince the very firſt beginners of Proteſtancy met with their matches, ſuch as they either dar'd not encounter face to face, or if they did, they ſtill came off with diſhonour. So that every one who underſtands any thing more then his own home, muſt needs grant, if number or likelihood of perſons may carry the cauſe, the queſtion is ended.

To which I could add the reaſon you mentioned, That Proteſtants, in divers countries, are *not of one Religion*, neither in reſpect of *Belief*, nor *Government*. They differ in ſo many points, that they damn one the other for misbelievers. Do but examin whether the poſitions, wherein they diſagree among themſelves, be not of as high importance, as thoſe wherein we differ from them all; and you ſhall find many of them the very ſame: Nay, there are not two *Doctors* or *Miniſters* here in *England* of *one Religion*; no nor two Laymen, who give themſelves to expound Scriptures, and make their privat ſpirit judge of their belief and tenets. And this, not only, becauſe ſo many variable fancies, grounded every one upon it ſelf, cannot poſſibly agree, (whence you ſhall ſcarce ſee two meet and conſer of Religion, without diſagreeing, if they talk long) but alſo becauſe all knowledge hath its unity from ſome ſetled and certain principles; which being not to be found, out of the Catholick Church, in matters of Religion, there can be no unity of belief among Proteſtants For though our Parlement has commanded divers Articles to be taught in the Churches of *England*; yet I conceive the Proteſtant Clergy acknowledges not, that the Parlement, (who are their flock, and taught by them) has any power to determine

determine points of doctrine. And indeed it were ridiculous for those, who think an universall Congregation of Bishops, and the Body of the whole Church may err in belief, should nevertheless attribute this unerrable power to their own Scholars: neither have I the least doubt that they still maintain constantly their chief ground, *That all men are fallible, and subject to err.* Where, by the way, you may note how unreasonably they deal with Catholicks, in punishing them for professing a different faith from theirs; seeing, if we believe differently, we are bound to profess differently: and tis evident they (having by their own confession, no authority to force any to believe, as they do) must necessarily contradict their own Principles, if they will persecute us. Now therfore since to be of *one faith*, is to be *of one setled opinion*, and *setling* cannot be without *infallibility* or *necessity*; the Protestants having no common Principles which themselves esteem infallible (every one expounding Scripture (*their onely rule of faith*) at his pleasure, nor so much as pretending any authority to controll anothers interpretation,) 'tis impossible any 2 Ministers should be *of one faith & religion*. Tis true, perchance they may be of *one mind* to day, but before night, if either of them light on a Text, which, after more considera tion seems to have another sense then formerly he discovered, they may well be of different opinions; And this in any point how materiall or essentiall soever. Thus may Protestants be said sometimes to be *of one minde*, or *opinion*, but never *of one Faith* and *Religion*; Faith being like Marriage, not to be taken up for a yeare and a day, but to continue till the last moment of our life.

And

And now, to return to the discourse we ayme at, As the number of our Divines far exceed that of the Protestants, so in all probability does the degree of their learning. The English Divinity, generally speaking, is nothing but *Controversies*; which are only the fourth or fifth part of Catholik Divinity: For, besides controversies, we have *scholastical Theology*; which explicates the Mysteries of our faith, and show's their conformity to nature and, human reason. We have *Moral Divinity*, which searches into the practiz of the Sacraments and precepts of good life. We have *Scripture lessons*, which dive into the deep sense of the written word of God, without farther application. We have *Mystical Theology*, which examin's the extraordinary way's of conversation with God. Lastly, we have *Ecclesiastical history*; which delivers the progress, increase, and practiz of Christian Faith, through all ages and places. And of all these, we have, I do not say books or volums, but whole Libraries written and extant among us. Then for other erudition, as Languages, Poetry, Rhetorick, Logick, and Philosophy; if Protestants have any, let them look into their Samples, and they shall find the most eminent and worthy to have still been Catholik's: so that as, of all Religions, the Christian, so, of all Christians, the Catholik is without question the most wise, and the most learned profession. Nor is this I say to be sought out in old Manuscripts or moldy papers; your eyes and ears will tell it you, in Catholik countries, and even in *Paul's Church-yard*, where you may find multitudes of volums of all these sorts of learning writ-

ten by Catholik's; And, if their shops were well search't into, I doubt not but, for books of worth (except some English Pamphlets and a few controversies) a hundred for one, would be found to be written by Catholik's. What apparence then can there be, that the Protestants arguments should be so absolutely unanswerable, so cleerly better then what Catholik's can say for themselves, as to bear down the right of Antiquity and Possession, whereof the Catholik's are the sole Claymers?

Nephew. I cannot deny but your discourse is sound, and grounded on common sense, and such evidence as, when I sojourn'd in *Paris*, I heard was there to be seen; but my thoughts were then more fixt on the Tennis-court, then such enquiry's. But why might not one reply that all this and more is necessary for the justifying so ill a quarrel? If Catholik's be not honest and vertuous, the more learned they are, the more dangerous and more able to maintain a false position. And I believe many Protestants conceive this objection not unworthy to be insisted on; for they tell us, the Pope has gotten so undisputable a power over our very understandings, that, for many ages, we have bent all our wits how to maintain his titles and decrees, without any care of truth or probability: So that the more wit and learning, the more blindness of passion and interest.

Uncle. I did not think learning had deserved so ill at your hands, to censure it so severely. No, no, *Cosen*, one man, or two or three may be more dangerous for their learning, but not whole multitudes; For, of its own nature, it is a principal instrument of vertue, being the discoverer and defender of truth; nor can there be a greater

figu

ſign of truth in any Religion, then to ſee it bear the touch of reaſon, and that the profeſſors of it are addicted to learning. Beſides, you are to remember, I ſpeak to one who profeſſes no ſcholerſhip, and therfore do not inquire what is, or is not, but what is moſt likely and apparent. It muſt be firſt known the Religion is falſ, before it can be preſum'd men bend and ſtrain their wits to maintain a falſity; otherwiſe, the very fame of learning bear's with it the credit and eſteem of truth and honeſty: And who delights in learned labours is commonly free both from quarrelſom intereſts & hurtful pleaſures, out of which ſpring all cunning, fraud, and circumvention, and a meer ſchollar is quit, by his very name, from ſuſpicion of guile and craftineſs.

But however, our Religion has, beſides learning, manifeſt ſigns of honeſty and vertue: all the points, wherein we differ from Proteſtants being of that nature, that they incite us to the practiz of ſome vertue or other. As that *Charity and the keeping of the Commandments juſtifie*, and *deſerve* eternal reward. *Confeſſion* brings us to the remembrance of our ſins and ſorrow for them: *Satisfaction* is performed by good and pious actions, *Praying to Saints* and *for the dead*, *keeping and reverencing Pictures* of Chriſt and his Saints; And above all *the preſence of God in the B. Sacrament*. All which are doctrines of great moment and conſideration, continually provoking us to lift up our minds to God and heaven, to think of the life to come, and practiz thoſe vertuous actions, which we are taught will carry us thither. The moſt earneſt Proteſtant, who has but caſt his eye beyond the ſea, cannot deny, but ther's a vaſt difference, in exteriour devotion, among Catholiks, above Proteſtants.

Our Churches open every day, ſervice and Maſſes ſaid all the morning, and in divers, the Office ſung a great part of the afternoon; Our ſervice much longer then the Proteſtants; Our ceremonies grave and magnificent: Our Sacraments more in number, more frequented, and perform'd with more ſtate and reverence. The riches, of our Churches, Altars, Pictures ineſtimable. Our ſolemnities and Triumphs glorious, Perpetual Sermons on Feſtival dayes, and every day in Lent and Advent. The B. Sacrament often expoſed, with great concourſe of devout people, as all Proteſtant travellers can witneſs. Add to theſe the multitudes of Religious men and women, whoſe profeſſion is retired from buſineſs and the world, to have more time to converſe with God. The often miracles, the frequent Saints and Perſons of eminent holineſs, which no boldneſs can deny, but at leaſt we think and ſay we have them. In a word the Proteſtants Faith ſeem's like *the piece of mony buried in the ground*, and the Catholik's like *a burning torch*, which forces all within its ſphere to caſt their eyes on it.

I know, the ready anſwer is, all is but hypocriſie, and there is as great wickedneſs among Catholik's as Proteſtants. But I could wiſh, he, who is thus raſh and uncharitable to ſay this, were as curious and careful to know how to prove it. For it were abſurd to think he, who ſtrik's but one blow in a ſmith's ſhop, ſhould make as great a dint, as he who ſtrik's twenty: And ſurely no leſſe fooliſh is it to imagine, that thoſe whoſe hearts and hands are continually buſied about God and godly things, ſhould make no greater impreſſion in their ſouls, then they who ſay not a prayer perhaps, once a month,

month, and whose chiefe devotion is to heare a man make a pleasing discourse in a Pulpit. I wil not deny but there are as fowl sinners and as many, among Catholik's, as Protestants, if not more and wickeder. For sacriledg cannot be so great, where sanctity is less, and who best knows his Masters wil deservs most stripes for his trespasse. No man could damn his posterity, but who had original Justice to lose: nor could any betray Christ, but who had eaten Bread at his Table. Wherefore Protestants cleerly enjoy this advantage, that they cannot be so wicked as Catholikes, having not such a faintly faith to abuse, nor such a sacred Church to disgrace. Yet I believe a good argument in favour of our Church, may be drawn from its *Saintity*; remembring well what an English Protestant-Clergy man of note, who had been at Rome, was wont to say, after his conversion, when he heard any speak against the vices of the Court of Rome. I have known, said he, many and many of the Protestant Clergy as honest men as ever I met with, in whose hands I durst venture my estate and life; but never any who had the reputation and esteem, among wise men, to be a Saint, or of extraordinary holiness: here at Rome I observe in a final number of great Prelats, two or three that have the fame of extraordinary vertue, and the like I find of all sorts both of Church-men and Laity, some still reputed exemplarly holy. As for the vices, wherof I hear the reports, and doubt not but they are too true, yet I see they are carried discreetly and break not forth into any publike scandal. So that, though many Protestants are morally honest, and many Catholik's wicked, yet does it not follow they are

equal in behaviour: For, Catholik's have some Saints, Proteſtants none, Catholik's faults are in proportion fewer, Proteſtants good works very defective, in the like proportion: And this difference is ſuch as worthily makes a mark of the Catholike Church; and as indeed, is befitting a Church made of men, who bear immortal ſouls in veſſels of fleſh and bloud.

But I had almoſt forgotten the difficulty you made of the Pope's tyrannizing and forcing all mens wits to ſerve him. Do you think he tyranizes over the bodies or the minds? If the minds, then certainly he has perſwaded them his power is lawful, given by *Jeſus Chriſt*, and continued ever ſince in the ſupream Biſhops of the Chriſtians. Wherefore they who are thus perſwaded, being ſo many, ſo learned, and withal ſo upright, that, for conſcience ſake, they will forgo the very liberty of their underſtandings, make a great argument that the truth is, as they ſay: For otherwiſe, how eaſie were it for a king of *France*, or *Spain*, or Emperour', to follow the example of *England*, *Holland*, and divers ſtates of *Germany*, who would aid and back them, if they would renounce this pretended Tyranny: whereas theſe Revolters from the Church of Rome did it without any preſent example, nay with the deteſtation of all their neighbours. Beſides the Popes names and actions are all regiſtred, if they did any thing of more, if they chang'd but their attire, conſecrated a Biſhop, or ſent a Cardinals Cap, all is upon record, Only this action of conquering the whole world, in the way of an univerſal Father, of ſetting this ſpiritual throne not only above Kings and Monarchs, Biſhops and Patriarks, but even above the

the wisdome of the Sages, and the valour of undaunted courages, this onely, by all Historians must have been accounted unworthy of mention. But remember, *Cozen*, common sense teaches us. That a *Position*, so directly against the general current of the Church of Christ, for so many ages, ought to be well proved, (according to the rule you granted me even now) before it pass without controul.

Nephew. Yet cannot my eye discern, why, this Authority being so great, may not of it self and by its instruments contrive and carry the plot so subtlely that the Learned (upon whose number I am to rely) may not become partially affected, and consequently the greater number be more corrupted; and so the opinion of three preferable before that of seventeen. Nay, in my judgement, experience tells us, that not every tenth person, even of the learned Catholicks knows the true weight and force of our Adversaries arguments; but with a meer preiudice undervalue what perhaps, they cannot give a full and satisfactory answer to: And how should it be otherwise, since from our Childhood, we are taught to rely on the Church for matters of Religion, and to reject and hate any that should seek to make a contrary impression in us? This being planted in our tender age, and growing up with nature, cannot but vehemently prepossess our minds, when we come to be able to judge of controversies in Religion. Nor is it to the purpose, whither it be fit we have such an impression or no, for I oppose not the thing, but the argument, which urges for the greater number of learned men.

Uncle. And have you not observed the same

passion among Protestants, and much more among Puritans? And do you not find those who slight Catholick arguments, are no less biassed then the Catholicks you speak of? Nay if you mark it, the greatest contemners of their Adversaries arguments, be they Catholicks or Protestants, are commonly the most zealous, or rather the most ignorant of the zealous. So that indeed the true cause of this partiality is ignorance, and not any prohibition, which contrariwise is a great provoker to make men doubt of their Religion. For ever since our Grand Mother Eve harken'd to the first, *why did God?* all precepts (whose reason we understand not) have been suspicious to us. Tel me then, suppose your self in a Ship, where there were a Pilote and his Mate, and some Captain who had never been at Sea before; and, in a controversie about their Course, they fall to variance, The Pilote and his Mate saying, *this is the way*, the Captain, by reports or guesses of his own, *saies that's not the way*; And thereupon, the Company in the Ship are divided: whether side in this case would you judg partial?

Nephew. 'Tis clear, those who joyn with the Captain; for, where one side has skil, the other none, 'tis evident, if the question be of Art, we ought adhere to the skilful. This I say is evident, if there be no particular circumstance or special reason to the contrary; As if the Pilote had some interest to carry his Ship out of the way, then it were another matter; but, standing precisely in the terms of your case, 'tis clear on which side the partiality is; for, the *Pilote* having skil, the Captaine none, the *Pilot's* advise ought to be prefer'd in common sense, and

to

to side against him were a sign of a rash and factious Spirit.

Uncle. Then they who appeal to unskilful Judges, prove themselves partial; and those who follow such as are expert; wise, and rational. Wherefore, if the seventeen adhere to the Mistriss and teacher of Religion, and the three fly from her, do not these, by this very Act cleerly discover their own partiality? You must first know which goes the right way, before you can suppose either side partial; and consequently, the number will stil prevaile, as long as 'tis in doubt which party is led by prejudice; and, if one side adhere to those, who were in prepossession, the other against it, you are bound by the law of nature, by the institution of all communities, and by common sense, to judge the pleaders against possession partial, till they have proved their motion so reasonable, as will over-balance the great authority of possession, which is confessedly against them.

Farther, if you consider, Christian Religion is *supernatural*, that is, such as cannot be learn't but from Almighty God, or from the Apostles, to whom Hee revealed it, or from them whom the Apostles or their Disciples have taught it; you will see ther's no disputing about Religion, but onely to ask what has been deliver'd? Which none can tell, but those, whose life and profession it is to teach that doctrin which themselves first learn't, to wit, the Bishops and Pastors of the Church. So that, who doubts of what these Teachers deliver must needs be ignorant of the means and way of knowing Christian doctrine, and passionatly refuse the true and certain Rule to find it.

Nephew. I see my errour; and it was the same as if I should condemn one of partiality, who keeps possession of his own, because he immediatly yeilds not up the estate before Judgment given against him: whereas, contrariwise, in the Civil Law (which I once studied a little) if one be put out of quiet possession, his Adversary may not plead till he be restored again. And sure, of all cases, the fowlest is to doubt in matters of Religion, upon less then cleer evidence; for, where authority is plainly on the one side, none can doubt without wronging that Authority, unless he have reasons weighty enough to over-poize it. And so I am satisfied in this point.

Uncle. Take this with you; generally no Controversies of Religion happen without some motives of interest on both sides; and so both may be suspected of partiality, but chiefly that which begins the change: Wherefore, suppose men were forbidden to doubt; that would be of little force, if once they discover'd their commanders were interessed; unless they saw withall, they could not mend themselves. Besides, in our schools, all things are called in question; which would not be suffered, if it indangered the Churches belief. Lastly, since 'tis great Scholars that govern the Peoples judgments; if they could find, by their learning, any other sure ground of Religion, *then standing to the Churches authority and judgment*, they would esteem as much of her Commands, as *Sampson* did of the *Philistins* shutting their Gates on him. And so we see by experience, that all truly learned and unpassionate Catholicks (besides the motive of the Churches Authority) adhere upon pure reason

son to their Religion, and will protest, by all that's holy, they would be of the same Faith, though there were no command, finding it most conformable to reason and to the grounds of Christianity.

Nephew. I know not how to answer your discourse; yet perhaps a Protestant would say all's but *probability* and likelyhood; and to hazard a mans estate upon *peradventures* were something hard, and not very rationally done. Wherefore I should be glad to conceive, more fully

SECT. 4.

The force and efficacy of these your discourses and perswasions.

UNcle. Why, *Cozen*, what security do your Merchants, your States-men, your Souldiers, those that go to Law, nay even those that till their grounds and work for their livings, on what security do all these proceed? Is it greater then the assurance our discourse affords? yet no man esteems them foolish. All human affairs are hazardous, and have some adventure in them: And therefore, who requires evident certainty, only in matters of Religion, discovers in himself a less mind to the goods promised in the next life, then to those he seeks here in this world, on far weaker assurance. However, the greatest evidence that can be, to him who is not capable of apprehending demonstrations, (of which the greatest part of mankind fall short) is but conjectural; for generally men distinguish not betwixt a solid and a witty proof. and so

as soon taken with a gloss or jesting speech, as a demonstration. Let but this very argument, I have told you, be put to some two men of several degrees in judgment and penetration: one perhaps will hold it for evident, the other only for apparent and probable.

Again, if ours was once the true Church, certainly they who made a breach from it are oblig'd to produce cleer testimonies of its corruption, or else be cleerly culpable of faction; yet, of these two men I propose, one perádventure will take this argument only for plausible, and at the least check forgo it; the other, looking into the nature of Government and seeing what a flaw there is in the contrary position, (that in effect, it destroys all Government) will couclude it so strong and convincing, that whatever can be said to oppose it, is but the playing of wit against pure evidence. Farther, if we Catholicks hold the truth of Scripture, as conscientiously as any Protestant, and that all controversies betwixt us and them are only concerning the sense not the truth of it; 'tis manifest, Catholicks must either be such dull dunces as not to understand their arguments, or so wilful as not to acknowledg what they see plainly before their eys; otherwise surely they would agree with Protestants in all points by them really demonstrated out of Scripture. Now he that pierces deeper into the strength of this argument, easily discerns, though sometimes learning may faile, and vertue have a bridle for a while, yet would learning cease to be learning, if it should not, for the most part, work its effect, and make its students more capable of reason then others: much less can true vertue be seldom efficacious, since its very nature

nature and esseuce is to be *operative*. Wherefore this understanding man, that observes a more constant pursuit of vertue and learning, in one party then in the other, concludes evidently, there can be no extraordinary weakness on the learneder and more vertuous side in comparison of the other. And, where he sees more means, pains, and fruits of learning and vertue, he will no more doubt (supposing this be a constant and setled course) but there must be indeed more learning and vertue, then he can doubt whether fire and tow put together will burn, or effects be without their causes; as houses, clocks, and the like, without Carpenters, Smiths, and other Artizans. Yet perhaps, he that barely looks on the superficies of this discourse takes it onely for a pleasing and probable consequence.

Joyn to this, the multitudes of Antiquity (I mean those Ages wherin Protestants acknowledg the Raign of Popery) and surely then there will not remain, to any of understanding, the least cause to fear or complain of hazard; but rather a great occasion to admire and praise Gods wisdom; in providing so short and secure a means, for every one who has the happiness and care to follow this guide of eternal salvation; looking with an eye of commiseration on those, whose dispositions being not fitted to the sight of this truth, remain in doubt and ignorance, by diving into questions wherin they are not able to find satisfaction, and cast themselves away, not for want of means, but either through their own pride, or by the misleading of their Directors; who, not seeing what's convenient for the dispositions of their Disciples, throw them

on

on the Rocks instead of giving them a fit harbour to ancor in; For, if they would rely on this plaine and open way of our discourse, common sense would tell them (if not, what's true) at least what they ought to follow; and that as clearly as two and three are five.

Nephew. I confess the evidence you plead is great; yet me think's, one might object, seeing we hear it so often and so strongly beaten into us that *all men are fallible*, and nature it self seem's to teach the same; as on the one side your reasons force me to grant it the wiser course to venter this way, so on the other, I still remain with this disposition, that it may, *peraduenture*, be false, which is able to shake the strongest resolution and cool the most fervent affection.

Vncle. Cosen, you offer now at a question of great weight and importance, and perhaps more then your age and wavering disposition is able to bear. Yet to comply with your good desires, I will shew the way, if you'l have patience to follow the track I lead you in, and you shall see

SECT. 5.

It is no hard matter, that Christs law should have descended entire to us.

FIrst then, tell me, What time, think you, Christ and his Apostles spent, in preaching the Gospel to any one Country?

Nephew, Our Saviour, I read imploy'd three years and a half, or thereabouts (for I think the time is not precisely agreed on by Cronologers:) But for the Apostles, I know not, nor can I guess to what purpose you ask that question.

Vncle. Is it not probable the Apostles bestow'd

ſtow'd neer about it as much time? St. *Paul* ſay's ſo of himſelf, telling the Clergy of *Epheſus*, that *for three years he had not ceas'd day and night to exhort them with teares, and warn them to take heed of falſ teachers*: And we may juſtly believe the ſame of the other *Apoſtles*, wherever they could conveniently, but eſpecially, in the Churches of their Reſidence. But why think you; took they ſo much time for ſo ſhort a doctrin, as you ſee the Chriſtian is, being included in our *Creed*?

Nephew. No doubt their deſign was, to make their Diſciples and the People underſtand, perfectly and fully, all points of Chriſtian Religion; to reſolv all doubts and difficulties; to make the apprehenſion of the doctrin ſink into their very ſouls; to ſettle a Form of Government and Converſation; and to inure the firſt Chriſtians ſo thorowly, to the practiz of this new Rule of life, that it might ſubſiſt and continu as long as poſſibly it could. For this I ſee is the *diſtamen* of prudence, in ſuch a caſe, and the courſe all thoſe who found new inſtitutions.

Uncle. And ſurely ſuch a time, for a little Province of about two or three days journy ſemidiameter was very ſufficient for the perfect informing of their Diſciples, in all material points, and ſetling Inſtructers to ſucceed them. But if immediatly after the deceaſe or departure of the Apoſtles, there ſhould ariſe (according to our Saviours forewarning) falſ Prophets or Ravenous wolves under pretence of ſanctity, endeavoring to devour the flock; nay, that even ſome among themſelvs, out of vanity, ſhould begin new opinions, drawing diſciples after them; and making themſelvs Head of a Party and doctrin, contrary to what the Apoſtle had deliver'd, urging

urging reasons from nature, and Texts out of that very Apostles own writings, by whom they were taught, or out of his fellow *Apostles*, and strengthen their Sect by the adherence of many of the more ignorant and unstable people; what would the Governors and Pastors of the faithful do in this case? How would they behave themselvs to hinder the ruine of their weaker Brethren?

Nephew. I imagin, that meeting together, they would examin this new Doctrin, *taking for their rule* that *faith which the Apostle delivered*; And knowing he could neither contradict himself nor any of his Brethren (being all inspired by the Holy Ghost,) they would conclude the Innovators Reasons captious, his Texts mis-understood, if obscure; or corrupted, if plain. For nothing could be so certain to them, as that which, for three years together, had been perpetually beaten into their heads; wherin they had been continually examin'd and cleer'd; and which they had us'd so long as the foundation of their new manner of life: so that, this must needs be the most notoriously evident to them, of all things; and therfore they would, surely, forgo all other rules, to govern themselves by this, as being absolutely free from the least suspition or possibility of errour:

Uncle. Your conclusion follow's plainly. For they having no other stay of their belief, then that St. *Paul* (for example) had taught them so; tis cleer, to them, these two questions were but one, *whither the opinion proposed was true?* and *whither it was according to what S. Paul had taught?* So that to be against what they had been taught to them, was to be false. Nor could there be any

other

other question in the Church, at that time, in matters of Faith, but *whither the Apostles had taught such a doctrin or no?* For they having spent so much time in preaching the Gospel in so little a Province; what they had not taught might justly be presum'd unnecessary, and consequently not deserving to make a schism or breach in the Church; and what they had taught, without all controversy, true and certain. Wherfore, if such an Innovator would not stand to this judgment, he was to be expel'd the Church, as disagreeing in the *principal Rule* and *soveraign Tribunal of Christianity*, by *which only* they could, at that time, decide what was Apostolical doctrin, what not. Happy that age, in which it was so easy to resolve any difficulty arising, being no more then to meet together, and ask one another, *How have you been taught?* and all was ended; and who should resist this decision was to be cast out, with common consent, as a *Reprobate*. But tel me, *Cosen*, how long do you conceive this *Happiness* continued in the Church?

Nephew. For the time of the *Apostles* and of their Disciples (who are commonly called *Apostolical men*,) ther's no question to be made, no, nor of the *Age* of the disciples of these *Apostolical men*; To whom I see not why I may not add yet another *Age*, for doubtless, those *Apostolical men* must needs have been of such reputation, that whatever was constantly remembred to be their Doctrin, was likewise esteemed as descended from the *Apostles*, their Masters, (supposing it known to be, universally and generally, theirs, and not the opinion of some one or two only.)

Uncle.

Uncle. And will it be a ſtumbling block to you, if we add yet another deſcent, of the Grandchildren of theſe *Apoſtolical* men? for the memory of publike and generally practiz'd things is freſh, from Grandfathers to their Grandchildren. So that this degree or *golden Age* may well conſiſt of *five* deſcents, that is 200 years, allowing 40 years to a deſcent; which is not much, ſeeing witneſſes of 60 years are ordinarily found, in every buſineſs, in the ſame Province; much more, where the queſtion is of a publick and univerſal practiz, which concerns many Nations, who have intercourſe and commerce together, ſuch Witneſſes may eaſily be found. But what ſhall we ſay of the next enſuing *Age*?

Nephew. Theſe deſcents, you ſpeak of, may eaſily have reach't to *Conſtantin's* time; when Chriſtian Religion being publick, the multitudes of Fathers and Writers would ſupply the defect of this *diorocla* or ſelf-ſeeing into the welſpring of Chriſtianity. But whither you drive that way or no, I know not.

Uncle. It is not needful; for, ſince the laſt age directly knows what was the *Apoſtles* doctrin, All ſuch ages as can reach to be aſſur'd of the doctrin and practiz of *that* laſt age, are able certainly to reſolv (though in a lower degree) any difficulty that ſhall ariſe: not becauſe they can immediatly ſay, ſuch a point is contrary to the faith of the *Apoſtles*; but becauſe they can tell 'tis againſt the faith of the firſt deſcent, which they know to be that of the *Apoſtles*. Upon which ground, we may add five deſcents more, that according to our former computation will make up 400 years, and, peradventure

by

by extent, may reach five or 600 years after Christ, to the *second conversion of Nations*; I mean, of those barbarous people which over-ran the Roman Empire, and brought almost all the world back to the formerly extirpated Paganism.

Nephew. We need no more; for the Protestants confess *Popery hath raigned ever since Phocas his time*; nay, they stick not to say, *Gregory the Great was the last good and first bad Pope*, intimating by this witty contradiction, that from him began *that* which they call *Popery*. And truly, in his Dialogu's, set out in English, there's more then enough to show, that the Religion of his time was the same *which* we now profess. Nor had we, (who derive our conversion from him, according to *venerable Bede*,) we, who are descended from the *Saxons*, ever any other Religion then *that* which the Protestants call *Popery*. And therefore, if the Religion, that then raign'd, was the Faith of the Apostles, it will evidently follow Popery was their Faith.

Uncle. Not only private Writers, but publick Records and Monuments are so frequent and numerous, since the conversion of those Nations, which over-ran the Roman world, that perverseness it self cannot require more evidence. And certainly it was the special providence of God, that setled thus a new world, and purged the old; whilest Religion could yet look back, and see her head, as it were, with one view. But I hoped you would have induced a farther consequence, and apply'd the argument to later Ages.

Nephew. I am afraid these calculations may over-reach me: for I see the Father and the sons

age

ge concur in some part; and so counting them severally, the number of years will rise higher then indeed ought to be allow'd.

Uncle. You say well, and therefore we will onely take that number which the Father ordinarily lives before the birth of his Son; As if the Son be supposed twenty years old, when the Father testifies, and the Father sixty, which you see is very common; and so the years of one descent will be forty, which is the number we put. But, if the Father be eighty, when the Son is twenty, then the number of one descent will be sixty; which though it be somewhat great, because t'is rare to have a child at sixty; yet t'is not so extraordinary, but a thousand may be found in a competent extent (as the compass of *England*;) and this number is amply sufficient for the effect we desire, for five descents of sixty years make three hundred. And, having told you how a general practice of any Countrey is known, by a kind of *self-seeing*, for five descents, which includes at least two hundred years; it will follow that, counting down from Christ's time to ours, by two ages at once, we may frame our discourse thus. As those, who lived in the beginning of the third Age, could certainly know they held the Apostles doctrin; so they who lived in the beginning of the fifth Age, could certainly know they held the doctrin of those of the beginning of the third *Age*, that is, *the Doctrine of the Apostles*. And by the like consequence, those of the seventh *Age* will be certain they are in the same Faith of those of the fifth, and those of the ninth in the Faith of those of the seventh. And so to our very selves; and all are certain they are

in the Faith of the *Apoſtles*. The reaſon of this conſequence is, becauſe two *Ages* is not ſo great a ſpace, but certain knowledg of publick and general changes through a Kingdom (much more through many) may be eaſily had; nor yet are two ages ſo little, that a great errour could lurk unſeen and lye ſmothered ſo long a time. We therefore, who now live in Communion with the *Roman Church*, know certainly that our foreſathers of the ſixteenth & fifteenth Ages, did conceive and think *this Faith which we hold, deſcended to them from the Apoſtles*: We know likewiſe, they could not conceive and think ſo, but that they knew the fourteenth and thirteenth Ages believed the ſame doctrine, nor could thoſe of the fourteenth and thirteenth Ages have the ſame belief, unleſs they had ſeen and received it, *in* and *from* the twelfth and eleventh Age. Putting now all theſe together, (the certainty wherof is, immediatly, founded in this our Age) you ſee they comprehend ſix Ages, if we reckon fourty years to a deſcent, and eight or nine *Ages* if ſixty, and two, or at moſt, three ſuch compoſitions will reach beyond Chriſt's birth. And this argument proceeds, though there were never any men living betwixt the ages of twenty and ſixty years, to continue the uninterruptedneſs of the ſucceſſion; how abundantly then, how ſuperfluouſly cleer will the certainty of Tradition be, if we ſuppoſe a perpetual flux of intermedial witneſſes? Wherfore we do not, we cannot want evidence, but eys to ſee it.

Nephew. Your diſcovrſe will be good, ſuppoſing the queſtion concern an Article of publick and great importance that muſt needs introduce a no-

a notorious change in the face of Gods Church; But why might not some speculative point creep in un-observ'd, such as the *Arrians* or *Pelagians* errour; if there had not happen'd withall so great an oppoſition and quarrelling, as ſhak'd almoſt the whole Church?

Uncle. There are two principal reaſons why no new point can be ſo ſmall as to creep in to the Church, without a great change. One, becauſe the Chriſtian Faith is a diſciplin, whoſe parts are ſo knit together, that one thread cannot be broken, but it will ravel through many ſtitches: As, from the *Arrians* denying Chriſt to be God, it would follow *No Trinity*, and ſo Chriſtians would eaſily become natural Philoſophers and Pagans; *No Incarnation*, that is, no God and man in one Perſon; *All the prayers and adorations the Church had hitherto us'd, and ven the form of baptiſm were to be altered*: And thus we might go through the moſt part of Chriſtian doctrin, if we look into the ſequels of *Arrianiſm*. The like conſequences may be deduced out of *Pelagianiſm*, and almoſt all other Hereſies; which for this onely cauſe have not run quite beyond all face of Chriſtianity, *their Being quickly oppoſed*, and ſo hinder'd from ſhewing the Serpents taile that lurked behind.

The other reaſon is, becauſe no new Opinion can prevail in the Church of God, without impeaching *Tradition, the rule of faith*; for *that* being once rejected, by the ſame right and principle they receive one errour, they may admit any: A truth, of which we have too much experience in the diſciples of all Hereſiarchs, who never fail ſtill to grow worſe then their Maſters. *Luther* broke the Ice *by appealing to Scripture*; *Zwin-*

glius

glius went farther, th' *Anabaptists* exceeded the *Swinglians*; the *Adamits* passed the *Anabaptists*; the *Socinians* the *Adamits*; and some went beyond Christianity, others even beyond common sense: So impossible it is any breach should be made in the Church, without a palpable change in the whole face of Christianity.

Nephew. It was not without cause you ask't me, What time the Apostles imploy'd in teaching Christian doctrine to some one Province or Countrey? your whole discourse seems to depend on this, that the Apostles did not barely tell the faithful what Christ had done and taught; but inculcated and beat it into them, both by words and actions, inuring them to the Practice of their Belief: their Belief being the ground of their actions, and their actions the effects of their Belief; and therefore could not be altered, without a notorious change, both in their Faith and Practice; their belief maintaining their practice, and their practice strengthning their belief. *And* truly, I see this is a connatural way to keep Religion uncorrupted; And that nature and necessity drove the first Christians, upon occasion of any Controvertie, to seek what the Apostles had taught; which being once begun, the ensuing Christians would follow the same course, *as long as Controversies could be resolved that way*; *which*, by your discourse, *may be done at this day*. But I learn't in Philosophy, that a *posse ad esse* is no good argument: for, if it were sufficient to prove a thing has been done, because it could have been done, none would be innocent, but they that are impotent; and therfore, I fear we are not much advanced, unless you can shew me, that

SECT.

SECT. 6.

If Christ's Law could have been conserv'd, it has been conserv'd.

Uncle. Why so, *Nephew?* you know, if any be accus'd, his denial cleer's him sufficiently, till proof be brought against him: And when it is brought, 'tis yet sufficient for his defence, to show, it does not convince; which if he can perform, the Law lay's no hold on him. And shall not the claym of so great a part of the world, standing in possession and maintaining the Innocency of the Church, be heard and esteem'd good, till the *Adverse* Party has made his proofs cleer and evident against them? Have you so soon forgotten your resolution concerning your wife's honour, for whom you were so earnest but now? Again, we must surely conceit the Church to be planted by Almighty God, with no less Blessing, then *that* he gave to Men and Beasts at their Creation, wherby their kind has been conserv'd to this day; for since our Redemption cost him so much more then our Creation, we cannot esteem his *Blessing of continuance* of less vertue in the greater work; especially, it being far easier to conceive how the Church is and may be continued, then how Mankind has been and will be conserv'd.

But *Cozen*, sit down with me a little, and consider, How unequal and unjust a condition it is, that the claym of the *present Church* shall not be heard, unless she first confute all the *peradventures* that a wild wit can invent, and solve all the arguments which the infinite variety of time, place, and occasions may have given way

to:

to: And then you will see how unreasonable an Adversary he is, who will not be content with any satisfaction, but such as mans nature scarcely affords. Yet, to answer fully your maxime, First I will oppose this other of no less credit to it; and by comparing them together we shall better understand the meaning of them both, *Frustra est potentia quæ nunquam reducitur ad actum*; to which we may add that God, the Author of nature, never made any thing in vain; so that, when *the same power* or *possibility* is ordain'd for divers effects; if any one be brought to pass it has, so far at least, got its end, as that it cannot be said to be made in vain: whence, 'tis no good consequence to argue from the power or possibility to any one of its effects in particular, because its end may be sufficiently observ'd by another. But, if the power or possibility have but one effect, then your first maxim fail's, by reason of the second; for if *that* single effect be not put, the power will be in vain. Wherfore, supposing once such a possibility, lest it should be frustrate, you must necessarily admit the effect, and then the argument is absolutely good; There is a power or possibility, therfore an effect. This, in our case, follows most cleerly; for, if Almighty God have set causes which may and can make his Church indefective, that is, if he have put a power or possibility of *eternal duration* in his Church; This effect, of *everlasting continuance* being of such a nature that it can be but one, 'tis evident either this effect will follow, or else the possibility is frustrate; which, in a work of such importance that it is the very aym and end of all the rest that God has made, were

more then absurd in common sense to grant.

And, to declare this more particularly, let us consider, Where there are many varieties, that which causes defect in one, occasions abundance in another. As, if in divers countries under several climats, there be long drought or rain; the drought in *Spain* will produce a scarceness of corn, in *England* and the low Country's a rich and ful harvest: Contrarywise much wet here causes dearth, in *Spain* and *Affrick* plenty. So the Catholick Faith being dispersed through many several country's, what in one makes it fail, in another will make it flourish. The hatred and emulation betwixt *France* and *Spain* made *Luthers* proceedings favoured in *Germany*, by the Princes which leaned to the French; and the same disposition made *Spain* and *Italy* oppose them more vehemently: The power and authority of some one person in one country, may oppress the Church; wheras in another, even to contradict and affront that man, it shall be upheld. And, as in place, so in time, divers occasions make it now favored, now misliked; but 'tis impossible, it being truth and conformable to reason, that there should be any so general and universal occasion, as to make it hated in all times and places: which yet is necessary for a total ruin. And this is it which maintain's all the progress of nature, because it has roots and principles in *being*; for no one sort of living creature which has *being* in many far different Climats, can be extirminated, the contraries, which must destroy it, being neither universal in place nor time; and therfore, those contraries once spent, the seeds of nature recover themselvs,

sprout

ſprout out, and bud again new branches of the ſame kind. So it is with Chriſtian belief, which becauſe it has ſo much connaturalneſs and likeneſs to nature, all its oppoſits muſt be againſt nature and violent, and conſequently not durable; which ceaſing, thoſe happy ſouls in whom the roots of Religion were preſerv'd will again ſhoot out and bloſſom, and ſpread wide, their flouriſhing boughs among the multitude, attracting the ey's and affections of all the world by the beauty of their fruit. Wherfore that the Church in particular times and places be diſcountenanced, is an accident within the compaſs of natur's mutability: But that in all Country's at all times it ſhould be oppreſs'd to death; ſurpaſſes the power of mutable cauſes, which were not mutable, if they ſhould, ſo laſtingly and in ſo different circumſtances, have the ſame conſtant effect; yea nature it ſelf, would be overcom, if ſuch violent enemies could maintain the fury of their malice ſo long as to extinguiſh it: this being her chiefeſt prerogative and richeſt treaſure to ſee deſcending from her loins a perpetual ſucceſſion of poſterity.

Nephew. I now ſee they, who in a caſe of great importance will not be content with what is proportional to their capacity, (but ſeek a certitude higher then themſelvs can reach, being unacquainted with thoſe ſciences where ſuch aſſurance is uſual) muſt needs miſcarry in what they deſire, if truly they deſire it: for I believe the affection of wealth, pleaſure, or ſome fore-made judgment carry's them againſt the ſimple and plain direction of free reaſon. However, *Uncle*, ſeeing it was ſo eaſy for the Church to have been conſerved entire in faith,

me think's it should be no hard task to shew, in effect, particularly from Age to Age, that it has so continued.

Uncle. If we could prove Bishops, in General or National Councels, had once, every two or three hundred years, taken care that no corruptions should be introduced, your desire might be effected: but this depends on Books and Histories, which you and I will not meddle with.

Nephew. I believe those Histories are not so doubtful, but that Protestants generally acknowledg them. And by my poor skill in Antiquity, I am sure there never passed 300. years since Christs time, without a Councel, and without condemning some Heretick, which cleerly prov's the Church has sufficient care, in this kind. Yet because I have heard your self complain of the sloth of men, who seek not into the grounds of Sciences: and often say, that far more, then is, might be known, if the principles were rightly laid, and the true method pursued; nay, that all Gods works hang so together by connection of causes and effects, that ther's no effect whose cause, by diligence, might not be retriv'd: I must therefore intreat you to condescend a little, even to the hardness of their hearts, who require more in this subject then in any other, and seek so scrupulously the ground, why the Church and faith of Christ cannot fail. For since we finde by experience these 1600 years, it has still born up its head above the water generally and universally visible, and bothendur'd and flourish'd notwithstanding all opposition; surely some powerfull hand, and indeed such as can never be weakned, must support

port it. And therfore my next requeſt to you, is, to ſettle and demonſtrate this all-deciding Concluſion,

SECT. 7.

That no great errour could creep into the Church of God.

Uncle. Couſin, you lay too hard a task upon me. Who knows why the world has endured thus long? or why mankind was not many years ſince extinct? and muſt I tell you, why Gods Church has not yet fail'd, nor ever can? I am aſham'd to anſwer every licencious brain: the negatives of a witty naturaliſt may oppoſe the moſt learned Chriſtian on earth. Yet, for your ſake, I will endeavour above my ſtrength; but you muſt eaſe me a little, and fairly admit what your ſelf ſees evident. Firſt you know, the Church, being the Congregation of the faithfull, cannot fail, but by the loſſe of Faith; which may happen two waies, by Ignorance, or by Errour. For as we ſee a particular believer, if he come to loſe his faith, either through negligence forgets it, or by arguments is perſwaded from it, and induc'd to believe ſome different doctrine: ſo in a multitude, they muſt either thorough careleſneſſe let their Religion leave them, or upon diſcovery of new motives they leave it; elſe 'tis impoſſible to deprive them of the faith they once actually poſſeſt. And, becauſe pure Ignorance is a meer negative or not knowing, the firſt queſtion I wil ask, is, *Whether a people once inſtructed in any Religion, can ſo forget it, that they fall not into ſome other, but live quiet without any at all?*

Nephew. Truly I think it impossible; both because I never heard of any Nation that had no Religion at all, no not the *Canibals*; as also because I have often read, that absurd Religions have continu'd from father to son, for many generations together, and never left till another more plausible was brought in; and, then too, with much difficulty, the people being loth to be drawn from their former belief. Yet if one should confidently oppose me, I know not how to convince him.

Uncle. You must look into the causes which make men Religious; and if you find them universal and perpetual, you may be sure all sorts of People have some Religion; though more or less, according as these causes have weaker or stronger influence upon them. Now then, can you tell me what is Religion in general, as it is common both to true and false.

Nephew. I conceive Religion to be a judgment or perswasion of the people, concerning one or more excellent Natures which govern human life, giving us those goods that of our selves we cannot attain to, and inflicting on us those pains whereof we know not the causes. And this perswasion reaches also to the manner and form of pleasing these Governors and Commanders; whereby to obtain those *goods* and escape those *evils* which we believe are in their power to dispose. And the reason why I make this conceit of Religion in general, is, because I observe these things are still in all sorts of Religion; and all Authors that write of the Religion, of what Nation soever, touch chiefly these points.

Uncle. Your remarque is good, and if you look thorow your definition, you shall find in it

it the cauſes of Religion. You ſay Religion is a perſwaſion concerning the Governors of mans life, in gifts and puniſhments, whoſe cauſes we know not. Then you ſee Religion muſt be a *Faith*; for what we know not, we cannot frame any conceit of, but by believing and truſting others, who we think know more then our ſelves; and therefore Religion, in general, is taken on truſt. Farther, you ſay Religion is a Method of pleaſing thoſe Governors, whereby to receive favour and avoid miſchief; ſo that the *deſire of good*, and the *fear of evil*, are the occaſions of Religion; we have then *hopes* and *fears* for the *will*, *ignorance* and a *conceit of another mans knowledg* for the *underſtanding*; which are the two Parents of Religion. And do you imagin theſe cauſes can be defective and fail in any age?

Nephew. Surely they cannot. For it were no generation of men, but beaſts, whoſe dull and ſtupid eyes could ſee ſo many *goods* and *harms* happen in the world, we know not whence, and yet think there were no cauſe thereof: wherefore it is the moſt eaſie and natural conceit ſtill to apprehend ſome of theſe effects. Now mens converſations being chiefly with one another, we naturally conclude all to be d one by ſome *underſtanding thing*, as we ſee our own actions are. So that if there were a company of men ſprung out of the Earth, like *Cadmus* his people, or raiſed out of *Emits*, like the *Myrmidons*; yet would they (if truly men) within a little while frame themſelves a Religion; according as, by chance or ſome ones apprehenſion or fancy, they ſhould conceit their *goods* and *evills* to proceed from ſome viſible or inviſible thing. Wherfore I

admire not that ſome people adored the Sun, ſome the Starrs, others ſome excellent men, from whom they had receiv'd in their life-time ſome great advantages; imagining that, even after death, they were powerfull, and beneficial. And ſurely, 'tis much more impoſſible that a people, who once has had ſome Religion, ſhould quite forget it, and come to have none: for theſe cauſes will be ſtill knocking at their hearts, ſtill putting them in minde, and driving them into the conceit of ſome God or Governor. If then the effects of perpetuall cauſes muſt be everlaſting, theſe cauſes of Religion (to wit, *effects whoſe cauſes are hidden*, and *the good and evill which come to us by them*) being never wanting, 'tis impoſſible Religion ſhould ever ceaſe.

Uncle. And think you not, Coſen, theſe ſame cauſes as well move thoſe who are ſetled in a Faith or Religion, to continue, without *changing* their once-receiv'd belief, as they keep them, from *forgetting* that Religion they are once poſſeſt of?

Nephew. I confeſs it ſeems evident to me, that the change of Religion can not come by pure negligence and ſleepineſs, no more then the loſs of it: the ſame warnings of nature, which force us firſt to Religion, continually calling on us to keep our once practiz'd faith and devotion; (eſpecially if founded as unchangeable) unleſs there be greater cauſes to countermand it, which I ſee not but may be eaſily found, ſome times.

Uncle. Peradventure not ſo eaſily as you imagine: For an Errour is a perſuaſion of the mind, and nothing can work on our Underſtanding but *It ſelf* and our *Will*; whoever therfore will make ſuch a perſuaſion muſt attaque one of theſe

two.

two. The *Will* is moved by *hopes* and *fears*, the *Understanding*, by *Reason* and *Authority*. Whence arise three ways of breeding such an opinion in our minds. 1. By bringing more Reason for it, then can be alledg'd on the contrary side. 2. By the Authority of some, so great, that their judgments are held beyond examining. And 3. by the Power of some whose hands are full of punishments and rewards, by which they can move the *Will* as they please; and the Will once gain'd can command the Understanding to believe what she desires. Do you know any other means?

Nephew. Not I, but such as are reducible to some of these three. Yet me thinks such an Opinion might steal upon the Church at unawares; some obscure man broaching it at first, and others accepting it, by a kind of negligence and indifferency to any opinion, or by too much credulity, not distinguishing right from wrong; though I see this touches somewhat on Authority, and so will be reduced to that member of your division.

Uncle. It imports not to what member it be reduced so there be no fourth way. But I thought you had learnt sufficiently already to exclude this; what can be more obvious to be noted and observ'd then that, which changes some publick and universal practiz? Look but, if any one go through the streets in some strange new fashion'd apparell, how all stare and gaze on him, the very Boys leave their play to follow and laugh at him: And therfore, to affirm such an Innovation can be brought in, without being taken notice of, is as much as to say, the cause of admiration or taking notice can be set before

our eyes without working its effect, that fire and tow should lie together without burning, or a stone hang at liberty in the air without falling down. These are impossibilities in Nature, and in the rank of those things, against which nature sollicits, by her continuall causes of hopes and fears; which made you confess, but now, that negligence was not a sufficient cause to produce the change of Religion. Let us then see, if by any of these three waies I have proposed, the change of Religion can happen.

Nephew. Nay sir, I wil freely, without disputing the matter, exclude one of them, the way of perswasion, or alledging more Reason against the true Religion, then can be brought in favour of it: For seeing Truths bear witnesse to one another, and the Religion we speak of is supposed true, 'tis impossible more reall arguments should be brought against it, then for it. Nor is the greatnesse of any single mans Wit, who should stand up to maintain the Error, to be fear'd; for, this error being to pass thorough a great part of mankind, 'tis not credible one person should so far exceed in wit, the rest of the whole world, as to put them all from their standing, without contradiction; or that, in so much time as is necessary for the spreading such an Error into the main of the Church, none should have brains enough, if not to bring more potent arguments for the truth, at least to find out the weaknesse and fallacy of those are brought against it, which would be sufficient to hinder the progresse of any novelty; For one in possession of an opinion, must have insolvable reasons to put him out of it, if he be wise and constant; much more those who ground their *tenets* upon

receiving

receiving them from their forefathers, and hold all Reasons insufficient to prove their Faith, because of its supernaturality, and therefore conceive themselves more obliged to hearken to what was deliver'd, then to any discourse which may seem to urge the change of what is known to have been deliver'd. Thus much I confesse is clear, but why the authority of some one or more, whose words are above *examin*, or the power of some, who hold the ballance of good and bad, of pains and pleasures, may not work an errour into the Church, I do not yet understand.

Uncle. You have drawn the question from an universall to a particular, for we spake of a change betwixt two Religions in common, and you speak of a change from a true one to a falſe. Yet this being sufficient for our intent, I will add, If you had that conceit of the true Religion, which much thought has bred in me, that 'tis the most high, wise, rationall, conformable to mans nature, to gouernment, to all things fitting for human life that can be imagined of all disciplines and learnings possible; that it leads into greater secrets of nature, then otherwise we should ever have reacht, and exceeds all the knowledg which made ancient and modern Sages so proud; If you had this conceit, you would be much more confirmed and strengthened in your perſwasion, concerning the true Religion.

But why do you think it impossible the Authority of one man should oversway all the wits of the world? Surely the Devil himself would rather help the Church, then permit so little pride amongst men. Never yet any great man wanted his

his Antagoniſt, who, had he ſuch a flaw in his credit, as this our ſubject would give him, it would quickly hinder the extent of his authority. Not any of our never-ſo-much eſteemed Fathers is received in all things, nor any of their authorities in ſuch eminent height, as is neceſſary for the effect we ſpeak of. Who was greater then *Origen*? yet he was condemned, even when in greateſt vogue. But I need not appeal to examples, where nature, by its own force, ſtrikes the ſtroke. For, either this new doctrin is brought in openly, by the ſtrong and earneſt endeavours of the Authour himſelf (whoſe authority muſt ſway the world) and of his followers; and then, by this very negotiation, it will diſcover its newneſſe, and being falſ, the more it is handled the more it will ſhew its weakneſſe, and at length go out like a ſnuff of it ſelf: or els it comes in neglectedly, being written by the *bye*: and the Innovators authority urged by others upon occaſion; and then the very manner bears with it ſo little likelihood and ſmall efficacy, that it would be every where check'd, and could never paſs uncontroul'd thorough any great extent. And if we put the caſe, as before, to be in the Catholike Church, where the truth is not to be handled by learned reaſons, (as being above nature) but by what our Forefathers have taught us; you ſee this great Doctors authority preſently vaniſhes into ſmoak, being there's no place for any ſuch pretence, where the conſtant and univerſall verdict of the preſent World is againſt it, in reſpect whereof he is but a ſingle man.

Concerning Force or Power, you muſt ſuppoſe, before you can make any apparent argument of it, 1. that this power is over the whole Chriſtian world,

world, 2. so strong, that it fears not to distaste the people, 3. vehemently desirous to extirpate the old Faith, and bring in a new, 4. that it has zealous Ministers to conspire in the same design; and lastly, that all these continue till all the ancient Faith be extinct. And when all is done, yet wil it remain upon Record and be known when this new opinion began; and, the violence being ended, ther's a root in mens hearts to reject this novelty, and return to ancient beliefe, supposing, as we doe, ther's more reason for it, then for the new. So that, in common sense and natures principles, the Pope had just cause to write to the Emperour in these terms,

Niter it incassum navem submergere Petri,
Fluctuat, at nunquam mergitur illa ratis.

But to conclude this point, tell me, *Cosen*, what time think you is necessary for introducing an error by little and little, before it will passe as a Doctrin deliver'd, by hand to hand, from Christ? For such we call a *Tradition*.

Nephew. I see this reputation must be gain'd, by making it quite forgotten that the other opinion was ever, generally, either held or practiz'd: For, as long as 'tis known the other was ancienter, they drive in vain who seek to establish the belief of this position, *That this was delivered by the Apostles, and so descended to us from hand to hand.* So long therefore as it can be proved the contrary was in vogue, and somewhat more, must the new opinion be in broaching and prevailing: and if I remember, we agreed that for 4 or 600 years the generally practiz'd *Tenet* of a precedent Church might be certainly known. At least then so much time is necessary; and as much more is requisite to extinguish by little.

little & little the former practice and belief: and yet will there ſtill remain writings of that time when the point was in diſpute, which will teſtifie, ſuch a Controverſie hath been, and that the fallen ſide was ancienter; and conſequently, it will ſtill be evident there was another Faith or Doctrin deliver'd by the Apoſtles before this came up, which indeed ought to be embraced.

Uncle. Then, Coſen, let us take 200 years to be ſufficient for ſuch an extinction, (which in ſo great a circuit, for a thing ſo rooted in mens hearts and practiz'd in their actions, is but a ſmall time) and joyn them to the 4 or 600 we ſpake of: And conſider whether any violent mutation can continue againſt nature, for 6 or 800 years; be it either of Tyrany, Authority, or what other occaſion ſoever, and this to oppreſs the true Faith grounded in nature. Might we not as well ſay, there would be perpetual fair weather for many ages together, through a great part of the world; as ſuch a perpetual diſpoſition againſt reaſon and our natural inclination, to the utter ruine and overthrow of our every where receiv'd Faith?

Nephew. You have reaſon. For though, when I reflect on the mutabity of mankind alone, and contrive with my ſelf how this might be effected, it ſeems plauſible to ſay, that another opinion might come in and deſtroy a receiv'd *Tenet*; yet, when I deeply weigh what you alledg againſt it, and ballance one with the other, I ſee my frame is limited within a ſmall compaſs and few years, but reaches not to the Univerſality and general Dominion or Government of Nature: Since, I could make the ſame argument

for

for not raining, blowing, and the like, that is, indeed, for the destruction of nature; I cannot imagine you intend to build the Church stronger, then the pillars of nature, on which it stands. We ought not therfore esteem Nature universally defectible, because we cannot reach to see fully how every particular encumbrance is avoided; for it is not that, in either of these subjects, the causes are not certain and infallible, but that my discourse comprehends them not.

Uncle. My meaning indeed is not to make the strength of Faith greater then that of nature; though perhaps I could, supposing (which is certain) that nature was created and built for the *supernatural* gifts and goods God bestows on it; which being greater and better then nature, 'tis fit they should have stronger maintenance and holds then nature it self; and therefore 'tis likely nature is strengthned by principles and foundations above its pitch, to the end it may be a fit and sure prop of Faith and *supernatural gifts*. But this point concerns not our present discourse.

Nephew. I now cleerly see the Christian Church has conserv'd it self from error; supposing the Pastors & Governors have carefully taken notice from time to time of their Forefathers doctrin, and confess my self to owe you for this lesson: But may not there have happend some neglect herein? Though I scarce find courage enough to ask this question; for you will still answer, that Nature must needs have its recourse, and however, at some times or places, it may suffer defects, yet must it of necessity, at other times and places, have its returns and freshly renew its care and be sollicitous of so great a good; which

which cannot but fall out once in 5 or 600 years, the term prefix'd, wherin we may discover the doctrin of our Forefathers, constantly held and generally delivered to be the faith of Christ and his *Apostles*. Nevertheless, if you could show me, that the Church had, in effect, so conserv'd it self, I should be more able to convince a perverse opponent and demonstrate, that,

SECT. 8.

The truth of Christian doctrin hath actually continued in the Church.

Unde. Is it possible you should be so unreasonable to ask me to prove a thing which depends on mans will? Yet, that you may see how great the works of Almighty God are, and how nothing is so variable, but he can fix and make it constant; I will endeavour to teach you as much as I know my self in this point; so you will be attentive and raise a little your understanding to answer me in the way of rigorous discourse; wherin you have some experience, by the Matlt-matticks you have tasted. Tell me then, if any great congregation of men now living hold this maxim for their Faith and Religion, *that Nothing is to be believ'd for certain and as a revealed truth, but what they have receiv'd from their Forefathers, as delivered by hand to hand from the Apostles*; and that *whatever is not so receiv'd, is not immutable, but may be alter'd if reason command*; do you conceive this Congregation could, in our age, have begun to entertain this

this maxim? or that, as they receiv'd the reſt of their doctrin from their foreſathers, they muſt not alſo have receiv'd this *tenet*?

Nephew. Truly I cannot tell; for me thinks it were abſurd to receive all the reſt from their Foreſathers, and take this of new, which is the rule of all the reſt: yet I ſee not ſo cleerly that I am able to convince 'tis ſo.

Uncle. Let us put the caſe there were a General Councel of all Chriſtendom ſitting (for example) in the year 1600; and, after much diſpute about finding a Rule to ſettle matters of Religion, they ſhould agree, that To receive nothing, but what had been deliver'd by hand to hand, from Chriſt and his Apoſtles, were the beſt way to end all controverſies in Religion; and therupon decree, that heraſter nothing ſhould be held for certain and immutable, but what were ſo receiv'd; And that, among theſe Biſhops, one ſhould riſe up and make this difficulty, We cannot know any thing is receiv'd by hand to hand from Chriſt, unleſs our Foreſathers, who lived in the laſt age 1500, have deliver'd it to us as ſuch; which cannot be but by one of theſe two wayes; either becauſe they had this ſame principle, we ſeek here to ſettle, taking nothing for immutably certain, and of faith, but what was ſo delivered, (and then we know whatever they have deliver'd to us as matter of faith, was receiv'd by them, or at leaſt they thought it receiv'd in the ſame manner, and therſore we may be confident of it,) or elſe they muſt have declared to us what is ſo receiv'd, what not, that the one part may be accepted and eſtabliſh'd, as of faith, the other held in leſs eſteem, and (preciſely ſpeaking, as

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no points of faith. This second we know hath not been done; and if our forefathers had not this principle, how should we have it? For, if they had it not, and have deliver'd our doctrine and Religion to us without distinction, we must of necessity accept much for Religion and faith, and as receiv'd from Christ, which we have no assurance whether it was so or no; and either wilfully deceive our selvs and successors, accounting many things receiv'd from Christ which never were, and so falsly deliver them for such to our posterity (and consequently ground both our faith and theirs on this untruth, that our *tenets* were receiv'd from Christ) Or elſe we must content our selvs, as our Forefathers have done, and settle no new ground of ending Controversies in Religion: If one should start this difficulty in that grave Assembly, would it not puzzel them all, and put them off from their resolution?

Nephew. It could not chuse, unless they were obstinately resolv'd to damn themselvs and all their Posterity: and that, impudently, in the sight of the whole world, which would reproach them with so notorious an imposture. Nor can I imagine how such a position, though once begun, should take root, The whole world being able to see and detest the indignity of it. And because I foresee your drift, I will grant, you may frame the same argument, for any age; and consequently, ther's no age wherin this resolution could have been *first* taken up, but *only such an one*, in which it was clearly known what the Apostles taught and what they did not, by witness from them, who had their Doctrin from their own mouths, that

is,

s, *the very next Age after the Apoſtles.* Whence we may evidently conclude, that Church which now holds with univerſal conſent, *this principle*, you ſpeak of, muſt of neceſſity have held the ſame from the next age after the Apoſtles.

Uncle. But can you now tell me, *Cozen*, whether this Congregation, as long as it adhers to this principle, can receive any doctrin of this nature and quality contrary to what their Forefathers deliver'd to them upon this ſame principle: Nor do I now ask if they can receive any thing, but what they *apprehend* to be ſo; but I ask abſolutely, if they can receive any thing as ſuch but that which *truly* is ſo delivered; that is, can they poſſibly be cozened in this queſtion, *Whether their forefathers deliver'd it to them, ſo, or no?*

Nephew. 'Tis evident they cannot. For, though one man may miſtake in what he hears, eſpecially if but once recited; yet, to ſay Whole Nations are deceiv'd in what is told them, not once or twice, but what they are bred and beaten to, is as much as to ſay all the world errs in judging white from black, becauſe ſome weak Eys are now and then miſtaken, or that none can walk, becauſe ſome have the Palſey: which were indeed to deſtroy Nature and its conſtancy in Univerſals, becauſe of its defectibility in particulars, againſt common ſenſe and reaſon.

Uncle. Well then, do you thnk their immediate Forefathers could teach them any thing, *as of this quality*, but what themſelvs believ'd and had receiv'd in the ſame manner?

Nephew. No ſurely; their immediate Forefathers could not deliver any thing, as of this nature,

nature to their ſucceſſors, againſt the doctrine they had received from their predeceſſors; always ſtanding *in this Principle*, nothing is to be believed, as of neceſſity in this degree, but what came by hand to hand from Chriſt or his Apoſtles.

Uncle. Tell me then, in the two laſt points concerning The poſſibility of our being deceiv'd in what was deliver'd by our immediate forefathers; or Their delivering us any doctrine, as of this quality, but what themſelvs receiv'd in the like ſort; whether you can diſcern the leaſt difference, betwixt any former, and this preſent age, or what you have granted of this, the ſame muſt not abſolutely hold in all other ages, ever ſince Chriſt?

Nephew. I confeſſe I ſee no difference.

Uncle. Reflect then on what you have granted; and conſider, if any error againſt a receiv'd Doctrine and Practiz, of this nature, could ſo creep in, that there ſhould be no determinate age of its beginning, in which it firſt took root and flouriſh'd.

Nephew. 'Tis not poſſible any thing ſhould begin, and yet begin in no time. And I conceive an Age is no ſmall ſpace, and gives no little growth to any thing that begins; ſo that to ſay, a point of doctrin is a whole Age in growing, and withal that it is imperceptible, and after a hundred years inſenſible, is without doubt ſenſleſs. Yet, if any ſhould reply, that an error had been begun by a private man, and taught to ſome few in one age; which, being unobſerv'd, grew into practice in ſome one Countrey, and from thence, by the like neglect to be cuſtomary in the next adjoyning, and ſo

to spread it self till it had possessed the heart of Christendom, and this for many years, that now all memory of the contrary ever having been in credit and practice were lost: I doubt I should be scarce able to give him a convincing answer and demonstrative satisfaction.

Uncle. Cozen, this question trenches on what we have already discours'd; therefore I will only give you such a hint as your self may work on. First, it is as manifest an impossibility, that a change of Religion should be introduc'd insensibly into any one Countrey, as that a burning feaver should for a long time, consume the same Whole Countrey, without being taken notice of, or sought to be prevented; since as we said, Nature permits us not, generally, to be sleepy in Religion. Secondly, to imagine it shall pass imperceptible from Country to Country, and so get possession of the whole Christian world before it be discovered, is far more impossible: our natures and dispositions being so divers, that, if we were but to weare Caps or Shoos a like, it could not be effected but by some Publick Force or Command. Thirdly, that this should be for so long a term, that the contrary practiz should be quite forgotten to have been formerly in use, is yet beyond both. So that, whoever is troubled with this doubt, understands not rightly the nature of Christian Religion: which is of the quality of a Science, hanging all together; to which a truth may be added, and yet remain whole; but if any falsity or crosse position be admitted, it will not only destroy the doctrine immediately opposite, but whatsoever depends of it, that is, all indeed, but chiefly *Tradition*; and so we see by experience, none ever moved

any

any point of Faith, but, if their revolt lasted long, they proceeded on to take away *Tradition, the rule of all we are to believe.* But, have we yet reach'd to the resolution of your demand, are you fully satisfied?

Nephew. This you have fairly concluded, that if our Church rely on Tradition now, it always did; And if so, it must needs have maintain'd the same Doctrin, from Christs time to ours: for neither could any former Age deliver any doctrin contrary to what they had *receiv'd, on this principle*, nor we mistake what they so deliver'd; and thus, nothing contrary to the first receiv'd doctrin can be admitted. Yet, me thinks, this still is wanting, to show, that The present Roman Church rely's on Tradition; which, I confess, to me, is evident; at least that whatever we receiv'd from our Forefathers, as comming by hand to hand from Christ, we reverence and embrace as necessary to be believ'd. Only I have one scruple, wherin I must crave your help, Whether *this rule of tradition*, which you affirm is so constantly held to be *the rule of faith*, be admitted for such by all Catholik's? for I fear, the variety of contrary opinions I hear of among our Divines will prejudice your argument; Wherfore I humbly offer you my most earnest intreaties to show me, that,

SECT. 9.

The dissention of Catholik Doctors, concerning the rule of Faith, hurts not the certainty of Tradition.

FOr I am told, some of our Divines maintain that, in the person of the Pope, reside's the

the rule of faith, by a singular gift and privileg bestow'd on S. *Peter* and his Successors: And this so rigorously, that no General Councel, no not though the Popes Legats be present and confirm it, is of force to oblige *as of faith* till the personal confirmation of his Holiness be obtain'd. Others, they say, esteem the Councel above the Pope, and so hold his approbation unnecessary; and that the rule of faith rests in the Councel. Others, to make all safe, joyn both in one, and neither admit the Councel without the Pope, nor the Pope without the Councel to breed any obligation of Faith. And farther, I hear that, among these Divines (of what opinion soever they be, touching the *subject* in which *this rule* or *highest authority* resides) some think no *New* doctrin can be broached or propos'd, as certain and as an article of faith, by what Authority soever, unless it were esteem'd certain before, and alwayes believ'd as such. Yet they tell me, there are many who maintain that *this highest authority of the Church* (wherever it is) may define points of Doctrin not certainly known hitherto, nor ever expressly believ'd before. And how all these Opinions can be reconciled among themselvs, or stand with this, *that Tradition is our rule of faith*, I confess I know not.

Uncle. Your objection is strong, yet I hope to content you. For the first part of it, I see no great matter in the variety of opinions among our Divines; for they only seek out the *Decider* of points of doctrin, that is, by whose mouth we are to know (on occasions of dispute) which be our Articles of faith, whether by the Popes, or Councels, or both: Which is not much ma-

terial

terial to our purpoſe, whatever the truth be; ſuppoſing we acknowledg no *Articles* of Faith, but ſuch as have deſcended to us, by Tradition from Chriſt and his *Apoſtles*. The ſecond part of your objection ſeems of greater force; becauſe ſome Divines acknowledg an *Authority* in the Church not only to determin either ſpeculative or Practical points of Doctrin, New, or Old ſo, as the whole Church is obliged to accept or not oppoſe its definition, (which every Catholick grants, and the reaſons I told you in our firſt conference evidently convince:) but alſo that it can ſo decree even a ſpeculative point of Doctrin, hitherto always held incertain and never acknowledg'd as reveal'd, never eſteem'd an *Article* of Faith, that hereafter the whole Church ſhall be obliged to believ it as a reveal'd and neceſſary point of Chriſtian Faith: Which you muſt know, is but an Opinion; nor do the Authors of it oblige any to believe it as certain, nor condemn thoſe who neither do nor ever will admit any ſuch poſition, and therfore this ought not to trouble you. Nay contrariwiſe, all Divines will generally tell you, that No *new* Articles of Faith can be made, that There's now no Revelations for new points of Doctrin, that *Chriſt Jeſus* was our only Law-maker in this kind, having deliver'd to his Apoſtles and they to their Churches, all that was neceſſary to be known, of this degree. Thus you ſee, all ſubmit to *Tradition*, not one either denying, or doubting; Wheras it appears by the diverſity of their opinions, that they agree not generally in any other means or rule of faith, though ſome admit another in way of opinion. Yet to give you farther ſatisfaction, I

will

will teach you a point of Philoſophy, which perhaps you never fully underſtood. I'm ſure you will not deny but 'tis a different queſtion, to ask, How an Herb or Tree grows? and how *Ariſtotle* or *Theophraſtus* ſay's it grows; for in the ſame growing there can be no variety, but in their opinions there may: So in man, 'tis a different thing, What he do's or is done in him, and What he thinks he do's or is done in him; as in ſickneſs, digeſtion, and other natural works is evident; and even in voluntary too, that depend on corporal inſtruments, as, to go, run, turn our eys, ſpeak, cough, or the like, which we do freely and voluntarily, yet were we examin'd by what inſtruments and motions we perform theſe actions, peradventure, who ſeems to know moſt would be found ſhort, at leaſt, among many, there would be divers opinions, But do you believe the ſame happens in our thoughts and judgments, which are purely ſpiritual?

Nephew. I cannot tell; me thinks the ſoul ſhould be ſo well acquainted with its own actions, that it ſhould not need any help to know them. All agree that only man on earth can ſee his own mind; and certainly if it be not cleer to man what himſelf thinks, nothing is cleer.

Uncle. You are deceiv'd, *Coſin*: as long as we are in this world we cannot know any thing of our own thoughts and affections, but as we reflect on the corporal motions which accompany them, and which, becauſe none feel but our ſelvs, none can know but our ſelvs: though ſometimes it happens quite contrary, when theſe motions break forth into outward appearance; for then others diſcry our

minds, and we our selvs, through the violence of passion, are not so well able to judg of them as others who stand by and see us. But, to speak of men free from passion, and who use to reflect much on their thoughts; even in them, their internal actions proceed from a principle directed by a superior guide, then their own reason: as appears by this, that they know nothing of what passes within them, but by reflection, and the reflection is a distinct act from the former on which the reflection is made; so that neither the reflection it self is always by voluntary design, nor any act which is made without reflection. Besides consider, how few know by what means their understandings are made certain of those principles and positions which they cannot doubt of, or by what vertue they adhere so strongly to the conclusion of a *Syllogism?* not one of a thousand, who do these things every day. Wherfore 'tis evident that, even in our spiritual actions, not all we do is done by our proper understanding, that is, with knowing reflection and design, whence the same person may, even in these intellectual acts, do one thing, and think he do's another; and divers may agree in what they do, and yet disagree in their opinions of what it is they do. And now to close with your difficulty; seeing Faith is a perswasion or an agreeing in some points, *by reason of Authority*, all the Doctors of the Catholick Church may agree in believing, that is, in acting and practising their Faith in the same manner, yet be devided in their speculations by which they seek to determin what it is they do. And it is their doings makes them Christians, not their sayings; for they live

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and believe as Christians, but speak and deliver their opinions, as Doctors, which are qualities of a far different nature. And have you not observ'd that these Doctors believe, after their Speculations and framing of their opinions, as they did before they thought of, or studied this difficulty?

Nephew. I doubt it not; for the faith of all Christians must be the same, and consequently, depend all on the same motive; though one may understand better, and apprehend deeper that motive, then another.

Uncle. Consider then, when these Doctors were young men and had not yet studied Divinity, you shall find they had no other Motive of their belief, but the Authority of the Present Church; and therfore, however they discourse learnedly in their Books, the conclusion must be in their lives, to rest on the Authority of the Present Church, as before they did.

Nephew. Nay, if you go that way to work, I fear you will fall short of your intent. For the Child believes his Father and Mother, the Parishoner his Pastor without reflection on the Present Church. 'Tis probable therfore these Divines rely now on the Motives they maintain, whatever they did when they were young.

Uncle. Not so neither: for, as the water of the *New River* which is brought to *London* comes to a particular house by a small Pipe, yet 'tis continuate to the whole body of the River; so the instruction of Faith, though it come to a Child by his Parents and to a Parishioner by his Pastor, yet the dependence of the doctrin is from the whole Church, whose members and instruments those Parents and Pastors are, if

they be in the Church, to which, you know, I told you what is required. And 'tis the same case when Parents teach their Children, what is to be done or avoided, according to the Laws of the Country; for though the father speak, yet 'tis the Commonwealth prevails and binds.

Nephew. At least, *Uncle*, such great Doctors should not be ignorant of a point unanimously embrac't by the whole Church; and therfore since they are at difference about the Motive of Faith, how can you say 'tis generally agreed on in the Catholick Church?

Uncle. Had this agreement been made in some Oecumenical Councel or universal meeting of the faithful, and so recorded, I doubt not but these learned Clerks would have known it: but it was not so introduced. Yet as by the universal blessing of *crescite & multiplicamini*, all Men and Beasts agreed on feeding and filling the world, every one in his kind; by the direction of their Master, knocking at their stomacks, when they were hungry, and at their Fancy, when they were full, to set on work those instruments by which the commands and design of Almighty God were to be fulfill'd: So by the blessing of *Euntes in mundum universum pradicate omni creatura*, the Apostles, being dispers'd into all Nations, by their Miracles found credulity, or rather, forced Faith out of the flinty hearts of the corrupted world; and having settled Christs doctrin, dying, left in their Successors souls and minds this agreement; *To believe what was deliver'd from them; to rely on those who had heard them speak, and afterwards on those who had heard it from them, who had their instruction*

ſtruction from the Apoſtles, and laſtly to truſt the Publick Conſent, which affirm'd, they held their faith by entail from them, though many ages after. This agreement being written in hearts and not Books, 'tis eaſie for learned men, who ſeek their learning in Books and not hearts, to miſtake. As in Philoſophy, whilſt great Schollars ſtudy Nature, not in it ſelf, but in other mens ſayings, they are divided and few in the right, the truth being but one.

Nephew. You have been as good as your word: For I ſee it imports not that our Divines be of different opinions in this point, if in their lives and practiſe they agree. And truly I never heard any Catholick make the leaſt doubt, either that Chriſtian doctrin was deſcended by Tradition, or that what was ſo deſcended could be falſe: nay, I think every moderate and wiſe Proteſtant will make no queſtion, of that which he conceiv's to have deſcended from the Apoſtles, by ſucceſſion. For Catholik's, we all rely on the cenſure of the Preſent Church, nor can or dare any appeal from it and call himſelf a *Catholick*; ſince we all account them as *Infidels* and *Publicans*, who are refractory to this *tenet*. Wherfore 'tis evident whatever the Church ſpeaks and delivers *for Tradition*, is agreed on by all Catholicks to be certain and unrefuſable: ſince then all other motives or rules of faith are not uniuerſally receiv'd, 'tis cleer this is the Rule which can oblige us to certainty in matters of belief.

But I have another great difficulty, that our Catechiſts and Preachers, when they teach us Chriſtian doctrin, tell us, This you are to believe, this to practice, without expreſſing the

differences betwixt the points of doctrin; wherof, perhaps some are but only the answers of learned men, some, definitions of the Church, and some, matters of Tradition. And the like I believe of former ages; Christian doctrin descending to us so in a heap or confusion, that 'tis hard to distinguish what is of Tradition, what the general Consent of the Church and what only Opinions of the learned. Why then may not some position of this last rank pass for a Tradition, by the adoption of some ages, in which it will be forgotten that ever it had its beginning from the wit and industry of private Doctors? And to satisfie me in this point, I beseech you explane to me how

SECT. 10.

The teaching of Christian doctrin, without determining what is, of necessity, to be believ'd, what not, hurts not the progress of Tradition.

Ncle. If I should answer you, that former ages have been more exact in distinguishing things certain from incertain, it would not be without ground; as you may see by the framing antient Creeds and other professions of Faith, as occasions requir'd: but this were to send you to Antiquity; wheras, in this discourse, we both desire common sense and Reason, without farther enquiry, should be our Judg. Wherfore the Point, you fear might deceive us, by the likeness of Tradition, is either true or false; if true, what inconvenience is

is there, though it surprise us in the quality of its certainty?

Nephew. I fear it would break the rule and certainty of *Tradition*, wheron rely's the whole building and frame of our Faith, according to your discourse: for, if once Truth, not delivered by Tradition, may pass for *so* delivered, what security can we have that a falsity may not pass in the same manner, and so bring an errour among us?

Uncle. I put you only that part of the question, *if the point were true*, which you draw into the contrary, *if it were false*; and unless it follow, that an untruth can deceive us in that kind, ther's no inconvenience in the consequence of the former part, that truth may be taken as descending by *Tradition*, which really comes not so to our hands. And the reason is clear; for seeing the Truths of Religion are known in order to the framing of our lives conformable to them, it imports little, in respect of vertue, on what grounds they are embraced in particular, so they be universally and constantly held: because an action done, in consequence of such believ'd Truths, is never the worse for the degree of the certainty of its object. Yet for your farther satisfaction, this I will ad, however the vulgar people seldom observe any difference what is of Tradition, and what but of common opinion; nevertheless those whom we call *Divines* (if truly such as the name requires) know to distinguish doctrins of such different natures. For Christian Religion is not a bundle of loose positions (as those, who negligently look on it may think) but a true Disciplin, hanging together, by consequences

and order, tending to one end. And of this Doctrin and Disciplin, some parts are such as cannot be learn't but by immediate Revelation, others such as no sensible person can doubt of, if he beleive the former: And learned men know that, of these, one is expressly delivered by Tradition, the other as firm as if it were so; For, as it was revealed that our Saviour is truly God and Man, so, every one of common sense knows he had *two Wills*, *Divine* and *Humane* against the *Monothelites*. Other points there may be, which need Art and study to deduce and draw them out of the two former: And of these a true Divine cannot be ignorant; seeing they are the fruits of learning and study, and consequently have always been in the souls and writings of learned Masters. And indeed every one (who is conversant in Logick, and in judging the qualities of such propositions as belong to Science sufficiently) is capable of understanding these Theological Conclusions. Your self I am sure by the little skill you have in Philosophy, and by the small light of this discourse, will easily judg, that this is reasonable.

Nephew. I conceive your meaning, but where you say the Points of the *second order* are as firm as those deliver'd *by Tradition*, me thinks thats not reasonable; since *Tradition* rely's wholly on God and his Word, but the other only on mans discourse, which is fallible and easily mistaken, and therfore must of necessity be much inferior.

Uncle. I would not have you take my words so precisely; for in such a rigorous way of comparison, even among demonstrations, the precedent will be accounted more assured then that which is deduced out of it; though in a moral

moral estimation, the certainties are equal. And so it is in those two qualifications; that little discourse, which is requir'd for the second degree, being infallible, and evident; and therfore the knowledg proceeding from it may well be ranked with the former. But I suppose, you expect to hear, if a Truth not deliver'd *by Tradition* may pass for such, why a falshood may not have the same progress, and surprise the Church, an objection that perfectly expresses it self in this following Question,

SECT. II.

Why no errour can passe, universally, through the Church of God.

WHich I will shew you in a word, because it falls into the repetition of what we have already discoursed. The impossibilities are three. First it crosses the resolution we formerly made, that one mans Authority could not prevail against and over the whole Church; For this is the difference betwixt a truth and falshood, a Truth, though it begin from one, may it be accepted by all, by reason of its evidence, (Which, when one has laid open, others may follow, not for the inventers Authority, but for love of the seen Truth:) Whereas error which cannot bring evidence with it, must be bolsterd up by the credit and reputation of the person, which we have concluded insufficient. Secondly, 'tis not possible an errour should generally prevail by reason of the absolute assurance in the universality of contingent cases

cases, whose particulars may be defective, but the universals cannot; And as it is impossible in Nature all Children should be born with one eye, all colts with three legs, or the like; so were it a monstrous accident, and that in a higher and more immutable nature, if an errour should generally prevaile and pass through all mankind, or through so great a part of it as we make account the Catholick Church is, and will ever be. The third impossibility is, because it trenches on the stability of Religion; for since we agreed it impossible for all Nations either to have no Religion, or change a true into a false, and that Christian doctrin has the nature of Science, so far that no errour can fall into it, but must contradict the known principles and receiv'd practice of the Church: and so make a notorious breach against the ancient possession; it plainly appears that, as it is impossible such a breach should become universal in time and place, so must it needs be impossible, that an untruth should be *universally* receiv'd for *Tradition*, having not at first been deliver'd as such.

Nephew. I confess your reasons seem good; yet perhaps they all produce but a moral perswasion, which may fail, as if one should say, it is reasonable to think an honest man will not lye, yet I doubt not but sometimes the contrary happens. Wherfore, pray tell me

SECT. 12.

Of what quality you think these your reasons and discourses are, and whither you conceive they bear an absolute certainty?

Uncle.

Uncle. I fear it will be too far on the night before I can satisfie your difficulty; yet I'le ſhow you briefly and familiarly what may ſuffice. Tell me, do you think ther's ſuch a Town as *Rome* or *Conſtantinople*?

Nephew. I would I knew what I ask as well.

Uncle. Why, who told you there were any ſuch Towns?

Nephew. Truly I do not remember in particular; but I have heard ſo many talk of them without doubting, that it were folly to disbelieve it.

Uncle. But if I, or ſome other; whoſe honeſty you have no reaſon to ſuſpect, ſhould tell you we have been there and ſeen thoſe Cities with our own eys; would you believe it more certainly then now you do?

Nephew. No indeed: for though I ſhould, in that caſe, make no doubt of it, yet their Authorities, on which I already believe it, are far greater; ſince, if it were not ſo, many of no leſs credit and reputation, muſt be lyars, whom though I cannot name, yet nature tells me, if thouſands had not reported it of their own knowledg, it could not paſs ſo conſtantly and uncontroulably as it do's.

Uncle. But if divers plauſible motives were alledg'd to perſwade you, there neither is nor ever was any ſuch Cities as we ſpeak of: nay, ſuppoſe you lived but 20 miles from *London*, where every day you ſaw hundreds of Paſſengers come thence, and your ſelf had never been there, and one ſhould come to you and labour to prove by reaſon, that it were a folly to think ther's any ſuch Town as *London*: Or, to make our ſuppoſition more ſtrong, imagin you had lived divers

divers years in *London* and never ſeen the Bridge, which every day you might ſee if you would, & ſome would argue againſt you, that there were no ſuch thing; what would you do?

Nephew. I would give him hearing, as to a fool or madman, and ſo much ſhould his fair reaſons prevail with me. For though I had never ſeen *London*, yet could I not chuſe but be aſſur'd there was ſuch a place, more certainly then the cleereſt diſcourſe could make me know any other thing: ſince it is as impoſſible ſo many ſhould conſpire in a lye, concerning what is ſo eaſily diſcoverable, and not one ever contradict ſo palpable an untruth, as that men ſhould be no men; and far more poſſible for me to be deceiv'd in the plaineſt Demonſtration, then ſo many to ſwerve ſo far from human nature.

Uncle. If then it be madneſs not to believe ſuch an evidence; what ſtrength will you allow theſe our arguments? muſt they not neceſſarily have as much force on the mind, as colour conveniently diſpoſed has on the eye? as the objects of ſmell and taſt on the noſtril and pallate? or indeed, as a demonſtration on the underſtanding? And in fine, if any admit not theſe arguments, as good and ſatisfactory, is it not evident that no defect in the object, but indiſpoſition of the perſon, is the true cauſe of ſuch refuſal?

Nephew. I confeſs it ſeems ſo to me; yet do I not fully comprehend the reaſon; for ther's ſo great difference betwixt natural things and moral, and the *will* of man is ſo much more mutable then the courſe of nature, that I cannot conceive how any certainty can be attain'd in moral things.

Uncle.

Uncle. I perceive you seek to engage me in a long discourse, but I will cut you short. Do you think it is against nature to tell a lye, or is it a natural action?

Nephew. 'Tis a Moral action, neither with nor against Nature; and so, in my judgment are all Vertues and Vices.

Uncle. You know we say *Children and Fools tell true*, and that fools are call'd *Naturalls*, as working by nature: And have you not observ'd in your self, that being asked a question, if you be suddenly surpriz'd you presently confess the truth, but, if on your guard, you consider and resolv how far to answer and what to conceal? Nay, if you have mark'd it, you never told a formal lye, but you were forced to frame a new thing in your mind which before was not in it: so that, what Nature and the course of learning and speaking breeds would never lye. To lye therfore, you must have art, and change some natural position of your Fansie, as if a man would turn his hand or face backwards; And so we say in Latin, *mentiri est contra mentem ire*, which is, to cross that which is in our minds, wheras words are by nature made conformable to our understandings. Whence 'tis manifest, *a lye is against Nature*, and cannot be done but by a voluntary resolution to change the course of nature. For though a falshood may be told naturally, if *that* which is falſ be in our mind, either by setled opinion or by the surprise of inconsideration: yet *a lye*, (which is the putting by of what is naturally in our mind, or at least hindering it to manifest it self, and the subornation of an other thing to go out in its place) cannot but be voluntary, and done for some particular

ticular end or respect we aym at. The same argument may be made to prove all vices against nature. For; if Nature be the principle of action in us, and none who bears the face of man (from the Boy that play's at push pin, to the Bishop that judges for heaven) but professes to follow reason and exacts it of others: questionless Reason is the very nature of man: and if Vice be nothing els' but the defect of our action from the rule of reason, 'tis evident, when we proceed against reason, we work against nature, and consequently vice is against the nature of man. So we see, man is generally asham'd of vice, and what he is not asham'd of; he will not repute to be vice, but defend it, as reasonable.

Nephew. Give me leave to interrupt you, Sir; for I fear I did not well declare my self. It was not my meaning to say Reason is not the nature of man; But, that there is a main difference betwixt the nature of man, which we call *Reason*, compared to his moral actions, and the nature of other things (as of the Elements) compared to their actions: therfore, though Philosophers may show perhaps impossibilities in nature, yet will it be hard to undertake the like in actions of *reason*, or rather of the *Will*, whose ways are so uncertain.

Uncle. No, *Cousin*, I did not mistake your intention; but I make no difference betwixt the Nature of Man and of other things; unless it be in excellency, which I esteem, chiefly consists in a greater constancy of working; so that an impossibility may as easily be shown in mans actions, as in any other creatures. For, cannot we say of many things before they are done,

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no wise man will do them, and conclude him a fool that attempts them: for example, can you think any one in his wits will take a Ball to cut with, or a Pikestaff to fetch water in? are not these questions as easily and certainly resolv'd, as Whether there be any Place without a Body; or stuft with more then one? Wherfore, we may infallibly assure our selvs, if a wise man be to cut or fetch water, he will take something elſ then a ball or Pikestaff to do his work with. So that 'tis manifest Reason has as firm principles as any other nature: And as the nature of one thing will hold till a more powerful opposite overcom it; so there must be in every particular man a contrary disposition, stronger then his reason, to make him act against it. If then you can cast up the force of reason and its contraries, you may certainly know the event of any deliberation: which though perhaps, cannot be exactly ballanc'd in a particular person, yet in a great number, in whole multitudes, you may; for some things conclude with as much assurance, as by the cleerest demonstration. As suppose there were an Assembly of grave and wise men, (as our Parliament or the like,) which had been favoured with a very fair sun-shine day to sit on; and one should tell you, that in the next Sessions following, they would decree it had been an extream foul day, and command, under pain of death all the Nation to believe and profess so. This I easily imagin you will say is impossible, but how would you go about to prove it; Would you not first cast with your self what force of fears or hopes were necessary to induce one of these Members to tell such a notorious lye, to the hazzard

hazard of his conscience and reputation for ever; and then encrease the difficulty by the multitude? would you not deny there can be any such hopes or fears, as were able to master one, much less oversway them all; considering the same interests cannot fall on such variety of estates and humours? and having well weigh'd all these circumstances, you would assuredly without the least scruple pronounce the supposed assertion false. For say you, *such a force* is necessary to break reason in this Congregation; but *such a force* at this present cannot be had; therfore reason at this present cannot be broken in them: in which discourse a Mathematician wil tell you, his demonstrations hang upon the very same gimals. Wherfore, as men know not ordinarily to demonstrate, that One body cannot be in two places, nor two in one, yet are we certain there is a natural demonstration for it, and we are by nature assur'd of it: so; no doubt but there is a demonstration to him that lives in *London*, that there is *a London-Bridge*, and he is naturally certain of it, though he cannot frame the demonstration by articles and sylogisms, as a true Philosopher can do; for surely a Philosopher, if he will take pains, may find a demonstration for both.

Nephew. I heartily thank you for this discourse; both for the present subject, wherin you have contented me beyond my expectation, as also because I conceive by it, there may be certain knowledg, not only in Mathematicks, but all other Sciences: since ther's so cleer and efficacious meanes of proceeding even in moral matters, which seem the most mutable and unfixt of all, and where I thought scarce any reason was to be expected. *Uncle*

Uncle. O *Cousin*! though he was a great man that said *Ars longa, vita brevis*, yet he must give me leave to be his interpreter, for 'tis not the length of Art, but our not taking the right way, which makes it long; otherwise Art would be but a convenient solace to our lives. Would you think a Private person following the war, without help of others writings, by his own industry, should surpass the greatest Schollars that have pored double his time upon books? and *this* our age has shown in a French Gentleman, not only yet living but young. *Monſ. des Cartes.*

Nephew. Me thinks, *Uncle*, it were a good work and necessary for the Christian world, if some would take the pains to set down the principles of our Faith in form of demonstration. For that I conceive would dispatch all Controversies and make the miserably divided Christendom of one belief and Religion.

Uncle. You are a young man, and conceive not the daintiness of the pallats of this Age; they would not tast such rugged and bitter stuff, they can digest nothing that is not sugard with quaint and pleasant jests. Who would read such a work? Who would have the patience to study it? to comprehend and make it his own? This very discourse, which has pass'd betwixt you and me, is chain'd together with so many consequences, mutually depending on one another, that, were it publick, few would carry it away. Let us, therfore content our selvs to communicate it with our own private atquaintance, to whom on occasion, you may deliver it by way of familiar discourse: wherin peradventure it may relish better and profit more.

Nephew. I beseech you leave me not thus,

without giving me some light to answer such exceptions as, doubtless, will be made, when I shall deliver your discourse to those who are better read then my self. Wherfore, lest I should disgrace your learned Lessons, pray instruct me

SECT. 13.

How some chief objections may be solved.

Uncle. I cannot give you a better rule then to stick close to the Churches authority *for Tradition*, and not be easily beaten off by great names and words; For, if you consider that a *Tradition*, or a point of Faith delivered by Tradition, is a doctrin universally preach'd and deliver'd by the Apostles, and imprinted in the hearts of the Christian world, and by an universal belief and practise continued to our days, whetof our warrant is no other, then that we find the *Present Church* in quiet possession, and no beginning known; if you adhere strongly to this apprehension, you need not fear any objection can be made against you. For you rely on the testimony of the whole Christian Church; you rely on the force of Nature, born to continue from father to child; you rely on the promises of *Jesus Christ* of preserving his Church to the end of the world; And on the efficacious assistance of the Holy Ghost sent to perform it, by whom Christs law was written in Christians hearts and so to be continu'd to the day of his second appearance in Glory.

Thus you see, no human Authority, by which our Estates and lives are governed, No proofs of

of Courts or Evidences in Law (which yet are admitted Judges of those affairs too many esteem more weighty and important then Religion;) No consent of History; in fine (if what we have said be true,) no Demonstration better, nor greater, nor peradventure equal. On the other side, you shall find all objections fall by their own weakness. As, some instance in the Millenary errour for a *Tradition*, wherof there is no certainty nor consent of those who write of it, whether it was publickly preach'd by the Apostles or no. and even thence it is excluded from the nature of *such Tradition* as we rely on. Others, finding divers Fathers agreeing in one opinion, urge them presently *for* or *against Tradition*: As if fathers, in their days, were not private Doctors, and might not be mistaken in some points as well as those of the Present Church. 'Tis true, we reverence the Fathers in many titles, above any living Doctors: yet every Catholick knows, that divers of them have sometimes faln into the same errour. And because they speak sometimes *as Witnesses*, what the Church held in their days: sometimes *as Doctors*, what their private judgment was: sometimes pressing Scripture and reason to prove their own Opinions; sometimes to confirm a known Traditionary truth: it is often hard to distinguish under what qualification they intend their expressions. So that, who seeks *Tradition* in the Fathers, and to convince it by their Testimony, undertakes a difficult task, if he proceed rigorously, and have a cunning Critick to his Adversary. However, 'tis not a way fitting for ordinary and unlearned people; but only such as have time at will, and are persons

of great reading and capacity.

Nephew. You have many Adversaries in this opinion: for generally men seek *Tradition* out of the Fathers: and think they have found it, when in every age, they can cite several Fathers of the same opinion.

Uncle. I intend not to detract from their labours who have taken pains in this kind: for they are profitable and necessary for the Church of God, and excellent testimonies of *Tradition*: but I neither conceive it to be *the Body of Tradition*, but only an effect and consequent of it, nor that the multitude of Christians, whose Faith is to be regulated *by Tradition*, need have recourse to those learned works. Wherfore, though divers Fathers in the same or different *Ages*, be found to contradict some point, wherof the present Church is in quiet and immemorable possession: their Authorities ought not to prevail nor are sufficient to prove there was not, even in their days, a contrary Tradition. For our Faith being in some sort, naturally grafted in the hearts of Christians, Learned men may now and then mistake some points of it, as well as the causes and effects of their own Nature it self, according as I told you but now: And, as in other points, so even in the resolution of Faith: wherin, as our Doctors seem to differ in these days, so might the Fathers in theirs. Particularly St. *Cyprian* seems to say, that the resolution of faith was to be made *into Scripture* and *not into Tradition*: though indeed he opposed not *Scripture* to *Tradition*, but to *custom*, which, is a far different thing, the one relying on the doctrin of the Apostles, the other on the Authority of private Doctors: and supposing he was mistaken

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it were no more, then what we now see consist with the unity of the Church. There is one objection, and but only one of moment; 'tis that St. *Augustine* and *Innocentius*, with their Councils, held that *the communion of children was necessary for their salvation*, and their words seem cleer and apparent: But who looks into other passages of the same Authors, will finde their expressions are *metaphorical*, and their meaning, that *the effect* of Sacramental Communion, to wit, an incorporation into Christs mystical body (which is done by Baptism) is of necessity for Childrens salvation. I remember not any other objection of moment, which may not easily be solv'd out of these principles.

Nephew. I will suggest you one or two, if you pleas; *Communion under both kinds*, wherin our Adversaries charge us that we leave *a known* and practis'd *Tradition* for many ages; And another concerning *the Canon of the Bible*, where they say we accept of a new Scripture or rule of faith, *without Tradition.*

Uncle, I thought, *Cousin*, you could answer these your self. For the first, ther's two parts of it: one, that the B. Sacrament was given under both kinds ordinarily; the other, that sometimes it was given in one kind only; and Catholicks being in possession of both parts *by tradition*, they, who will prove that Catholicks go *against Tradition*, must prove it was never administred under one kind only; which our Adversaries neither offer at nor can perform, but ply only this branch, that *ordinarily*, it was administred under both kinds, which we both freely and safely grant them. For the second, 'tis not sufficient to show, that some have doubted

of this or that part of the Canon; unless they can prove, that those, who did not doubt, were not a sufficient party to make a *Tradition* from the Apostles time. And so you see it falls into the question we mention'd before, That some Fathers or Doctors, being of a contrary mind, break not the force of *Tradition*.

Nephew. I am loth to leave you, *Uncle*, because me thinks I am not sufficiently arm'd to answer all objections: And yet whatever I call to mind falls into some of these conditions you require.

Uncle. Let me see how skilful you are; I'le try if you can answer me to

SECT. 14.

The examples of Tradition, which seem to have fail'd.

First, therfore; betwixt *Adams* being cast out of Paradise and the *Deluge*; there are accounted about two thousand years, which, according to the long lives of those times, made not fully three descents: yet in *Noahs* days the forgetting of Gods law was so gross and general, that an universal flood was necessary for cleansing the world. *Sem* was *Noahs* son, and, before his death, both the Divisions of Nations happen'd, for their pride against God, and (as most Historians think) the selecting *Abrams* family into Gods service, all the rest of the world having abandon'd it. Besides what's become of all ancient Religions, most of them deliver'd *by Tradition*, yet all gone and rooted out? So that

that plain experience is againſt thoſe fine diſcourſes you approv'd ſo highly: What anſwer would you make to this?

Nephew. Marry, I would deny it to be true: and ſay Gods law was not forgotten, but neglected before the flood; and ſo at the building of *Babel*; For *Abrahams* time, we know *Abimelech*, *Pharao Melchiſedech*, and others (as *Job* whenſoever he lived) obſerv'd Gods law. As for Heathen Religions, they were written in books, for any thing I know; and therfore bring no more prejudice to *tradition* then to a *written law*, and conſequently belong not to this controverſie. And thus I think I ſhould quit my ſelf wel enough.

Uncle. Soon enough, at leaſt: but let us ſee, if it be with as good ſpeed as much haſt. Suppoſe they ſhould reply, that the neglect of Gods law muſt of neceſſity breed oblivion: and therfore either Gods law was forgotten, or in a ſhort ſpace would have been, if the puniſhment of the Deluge had not prevented it. And for the men you cite of *Abrahams* time, they were but few; and though Gods law then had yet ſome little force, look but into the days of *Moſes*, you ſhall ſee all overrun with Idolatry. For Heathen Religions, 'tis ſaid of the *Druids*, their Ceremonies were not written, but delivered by memory in verſe from the elder to the younger: and the Hiſtories of the Welch and Iriſh are thought to have been conſerv'd the ſame way by the *Bards*; which, how full of fables they were, every one knows. All which together ſeem ſufficient to diſcredit *Tradition*.

Nephew. I muſt intreat your helping hand to faſten me on this ſhaking ſhore, otherwiſe I

perceive I am too weak to ſtand by my own ſtrength.

Uncle. 'Tis not the flore you ſtand on; but want of confidence makes you ſo unſteadfaſt. For, tell me, if you remember on what rely's the firmneſs of *Tradition?*

Nephew. You ſaid, the *Tradition* of Chriſtian faith was a great while a planting in the hearts of men, by force of innumerable Miracles, and that not only in their Underſtandings but in their Wills and affections; and ſo cultivated, till *the main of the people* were *conſtantly* perſwaded there was no ſalvation without it. This was done at the ſame time in many Country's; not knowing one of another, nor being able to correſpond and frame any draught of belief together; but every one receiving what was deliver'd from his particular preacher.

Uncle. Return then now to your objections: and look what force they have againſt *this* your declaration of *Tradition.*

Nephew. As for *Adams* children, I ſee *one man and one woman* were the *only witneſſes* of wonders ſo high and admirable, that the parties to whom they recounted them could hardly believe. Nay; themſelvs had ſo little experience of thoſe ſtrange things they told, that (for ought we know) they never ſo much as taſted any fruit in Paradiſe but the forbidden tree; And what care they had of Religion, more then to recommend Gods ſervice to their children, and that only as long as they lived with them, we know not; ſo that it ſeems what they taught took no ſtrong root, nor in many. For *Noah*, the ſame anſwer may be given; two of his Sons parting ſhortly from him, either into far country's,

try's, or to such a distance that they seldom came to see him: Whence I perceive, there is a great difference betwixt the delivery of Christs Gospel, and the law of God to those Fathers of the old Testament.

Uncle. Your observations are good. And indeed, since we require *Tradition* should have the continuance of Nature, we must see it be planted accordingly; which you note well to have been perform'd in Christs, but not in the old law; the fathers and people of that time being much hinder'd by the great business of the worlds plantation; every one seeking to plant country's, build cities, find out commodities for the conservation of mans life, occupations far different from the thoughts of Heaven, and things of the next world. To this you may add there were not then any setled orders of Priests, whose function should be to inculcate the necessity of Religion into mens ears and hearts, which we know the Apostles had care to perform every where. Again, there was no such correspondence betwixt several country's in those times as has always been among Christians, especially by the mediation of a chief Bishop which Christ has set over us; And no doubt but these two last points are principal causes of the propogation and conservation of Christian Faith. Besides, even the points of Faith were not then able to work on mans Nature so powerfully, as since Christs coming, according to our yesternights discourse. So that, the root and strength of Tradition being grounded on this, that *such a belief is fixed in peoples hearts of several Nations*, the examples fail in three things. First, that the Multitude was not capable of

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it, it being so spiritual and abstract. Secondly, that it was not inculcated with that Fervour of Spirit, Assistance of the Holy Ghost, and Abundance of Continual Miracles, as Christs law was. Thirdly, there was not a set form and institution of Priests and Governors to joyn *all nations in communion* for the conservation of their belief; So that it never had the root and nature of an universal Tradition. By these examples, you may easily answer all other objections of this nature. And now I will leave you, lest I should overweary both you and my self.

Nephew. As you please, Sir. Yet that I may be sure to have fully conceiv'd the main drift of your instructions, I pray let me see, if I can make

SECT. 15.

The Conclusion of all our discourse.

IT was, first, your intention to give me *a rule how to govern my self in the choice of Religion*: Then you concluded *Scripture could not be this rule*; Wherupon, you show'd me two ways to resolv my self. First, that, standing on the ground of prepossession, there was no probability the Protestants arguments could be sufficient to over ballance the Catholicks, because they must be convincing clearly, or else rejected; and, that the Protestants should bring any demonstrative arguments against the Catholicks, there is no apparence, Catholicks being more in Number, in quality greater Schollers, in life more Vertuous; on the contrary side, Protestants having no principles or command, which may make them

them agree among themselvs; then you obſerv'd that though this perſwaſion did not evidently convince the Catholick faith to be true, yet it manifeſtly proved That was to be choſen by the unlearned. Your ſecond way gave me a direct proof that the Catholick doctrin is true: which you did in three ſeveral manners. Firſt, by declaring it was no hard matter for the Catholick Church to conſerv the truth of her doctrin, if ſhe were careful; which Hiſtories plainly bear witneſs ſhe was. Secondly, ſhowing that Nature forces men to have care of Religion, and therfore it was impoſſible any error ſhould ſo creep into the Church, that it ſhould be univerſally receiv'd, the very Nature of man and human affairs contradicting its progreſs. Thirdly, explaining how the Church, now relying on *Tradition*, muſt of neceſſity have always done ſo; which if it has, no errour could be ſuffer'd to creep in, much leſs be generally admitted. This is all I remember, except the ſolving ſome objections and the diſcovering ſome of my impertinent anſwers, which I hope you will excuſe and forget. If I have miſs'd, pray direct me.

Uncle. You have taken good notice, and I think my pains well beſtow'd; only I would intreat you make a little reflection, and compare the knowledg we have by theſe means, to that which Scripture affords, if handled in a litigious way, as in Controverſies is neceſſary; and you ſhall find *Tradition is grounded on that which all men agree in*, which is common to all ages, all nations, all conditions; But the knowledg we have by *Scripture is grounded on that which is different in every Nation.* Hence ſprings another diverſity between them, that the one

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is planted in nature, and in what *God* created in man: the other in what *men* themselvs framed; and that not by design or art; but by custome and chance. Out of which again it follows, that the one is capable of necessity, and consequently of a perfect demonstration, (as all natural things are;) the other not; The one is fix'd on universals; the other vagabond in particulars. As for example, who is able to demonstrate that a Word in Controversie has no other sense, then *that* which is necessary for his purpose, or, where the construction may be made divers ways, that the true one is *that* he pleads? Who can demonstrate, among varieties of *Texts* which was the Original? that the Copies we have are not defective? which, ordinarily, are necessary, if we will evidently convince our intent out of the place we chuse. On the other side, To show That whole multitudes of several nations cannot miss in what has been, a thousand times over and over, inculcated to them; That a world cannot conspire to cozen their posterity; That mankind cannot accept a doctrin against an evident principle, which they at the same time maintain, (*the very maxims Tradition depends on*) to show, these things, there needs no deep learning; being both known of themselvs, and as necessarily conjoint and dependant on mans nature, as his other natural actions, and therfore may beat as good a demonstration as they. Which if we have not, it is not through any defect or incapacity of the subject, but the want of our looking into it; and that either because we take not the right way, or bestow not sufficient pains in the prosecution. So that, in fine, though

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the *Roman Church* had fallen (which is impoſſible) into thoſe errors the Proteſtants pretend; yet were it better be content with the good that remains *in It*, then caſt our ſelvs into an endleſs and fruitleſs maze of diſputations, with trouble to all the world, and that to no other effect, then to make people unſetled, and by their unſetledneſs, in time wholly to neglect all Religion. But Gods wiſdome (as you ſee) has provided an Evidence for thoſe that will take pains to ſeek it,

1. *That the Points in Controverſie are of importance and neceſſary to be known,*

2. *That they cannot be ſo known by Scripture, as is requiſite for deciſions againſt contentious men, and*

3. *That they may be certainly known, by reſting quiet in the boſom of the Catholick Church*, Which God, of his mercy, give you and me grace to do both living and dying.

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THE FOURTH DIALOGUE.

The Occasion.

Nephew.

Did I not finde you so ready to bear with my impertinent demands, and give me satisfaction in them as far as I am capable: I should be both ashamed and discouraged to produce my weak conceptions; but having encountred lately, since I had the honour to see you, an adversary, whose sharp objections have left some trouble in my mind, I humbly beg your permission to open my wounds before you And, not to abuse your patience to the losse of your time, which you most justly and wisely use to call *your life*; for truly, who orders not every part of his life to the end for which it was given, makes it so far unprofitable, if not hurtfull to himselfe.

My fortune was thus: I went to *London*, richly fraught with those good notions I had sucked out of your Discourses, and lighting into an *Ordinary*, where there was much talk of Religion, you need not doubt my readinesse to broach what I was full of. Neither can I deny but I found

found a reasonable fair acceptance in the greatest part of the company. But there was one, a near young Gentleman, though I think past thirty, and as I perceiv'd a traveller, of a very graceſull behaviour, who, when the reſt ſeemed divided in opinion about my ſpeeches, took up the quarrel, & after ſome civilities and profeſſing that what I delivered appear'd in ſome way new to him, though he was not ignorant, that Catholicks maintain'd a continuate ſucceſſion of their Faith ſince the Apoſtles; he told me (to the aſtoniſhment of the hearers) that he eaſily allowed all I had ſaid againſt the certainty of Scriptures verdict in caſe of determining Faith. He added (very unexpectedly to my ſelfe) that he did not much inſiſt, whether the Tradition I defended could fail us or no: nor whether the points, which in the firſt part of my diſcourſe I had preſſed to be ſo important, that unity of Religion could not ſtand with difference in them, were ſuch or no. But the chiefe of his reply conſiſted in this, that it mattered not greatly what the nature of things were in themſelves, but what they were in us: that is, *how well known* to be ſuch as I urged them. For though (ſaid he) they be in themſelves ſuch as you pretend, yet if a nimble and penetrating wit can caſt a darkneſſe and doubtfulneſſe into that, which you call clear and certain, I cannot perſwade my ſelfe, that, to believe ſuch ambiguous poſitions can be of neceſſity for ſalvation.

Then he began a very pleaſing diſcourſe about the goodneſſe of God, and enlarged it, with ſhewing a great weakneſſe in mankind; and out of both concluded, nothing more reaſonable, (ſince it was in Gods power to give us ſalvation,

for

for how little it pleased him) then that so great goodnesse should not force so much weaknesse, under pain of Damnation, to a right choice, where the difficulties might by the subtilty of interessed parties, be rais'd to such heights and knottinesse, as to trouble scholers to finde a good resolution of them.

He descended finally to this Conclusion, that for his own part this discourse made him rest quietly in this apprehension, that nothing is necessary for salvation, but such as all moderate men agree in, and which (notwithstanding all I had said against Scripture) were evidently enough to be found in it. Since he did not conceive it was my intent to say the commonest things could not be convinced out of Scripture, for that were to deny it to be a Book, and as much against common sense, as to think our controversies could be decided by the bare letter. Then, turning to me, he intreated me to make it plain to him, that God could not save us without the certain assent to so many points as were in controversie; or else not to think hardly of him, who upon the fore-declared principle studied nothing but how to live uprightly, according to the little he knew; and for the rest, it so fill'd his part in discourse, that it entred not deeply into his soul, whether side was true.

Uncle. I need not enquire what impression this conference made on you, for I easily see you met with a shrewd encounter: but I may ask how you came off, and with what satisfaction of the Auditory, which you say was very attentive.

Nephew. To confesse the truth ingeniously, I felt my thoughts run up and down very apprehensive of the event, seeing it gain so great

applause

applause and appear so close and rational a discourse. Yet (though on the sudden I understood not how to disintricate my self, me thought by a secret instinct or inclination to Religion in common, his reply was absurd, as, in my conceit really taking away all Religion and good life, by drawing them into so narrow a compass, and rather into a moral honesty, engrafted by nature in mankind, then by any Precepts of God? Yet I found my self not able to make this appear; though afterward I perceiv'd the same inclination had some force also in the rest of the company. For I having prest the profit of the mysteries in controversie, and the horridness which must follow on the false party; And having opposed, against his difficulty of knowledge, the easiness of *Tradition*, which makes its knowledge common and certain even to Children and fools, it being no more then not to dissent where all motives, nature and art can multiply, concurre to enforce our submission: I seem'd to see good nature (if I may so call it) work in the breasts of the hearers, and secretly perswade them, my speeches had a great shew of reason; though, to tell you the bottom of my heart, I was not my self confident my assertions were sufficient to force a belief in him or any other so smart a discourser. And this is the reason why *I* have my recourse to you; both my former experience, and the quality of the question, assuring me, *I* shall find quiet and satisfaction from you, for this as well as for the rest.

Uncle. *I* shall do my endeavour: but *I* would know whether he reply'd against these answers of yours; or thought he had deliver'd himself

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sufficiently in his former discourse.

Nephew. Betwixt both: and I must give him as well the Commendation of ingenuity as of wit and ability; For having permitted me to end my reply, He first took notice gently and gentily, that by my silence I agreed with him, that my intention, in speaking about Scripture, reach'd not so far as to deny so much might be known by it, as he pretended to be enough for salvation. He then joyn'd the other two points in one, by intreating me not to take him for so great an Enemy to our Religion, that he either condemn'd it of *Idolatry* or *Superstition*, as the ignorant multitude doe; or disliked the general practises of it, so they were limitted with due moderation. Nay he profess'd, had God put him in the circumstances of a law-maker, among all he knew he would chuse our Forms for regulating the Commonwealth: For (said he) I account your Religion truly Politicks not so as is commonly objected against you, that 'tis built according to the interest of the Clergy (though I doe not wholly quit your principles from such disorders) but I call it Politick, as best for a true and natural government of People. For certainly, he understands little of mans nature, who sees not that your *Holidays*, *Pompe*, variety of *Saints*, your *Prayer* for the *Dead*, *Your Religious Habits* and *professions*, and such like customs, draw extreamly the hearts of the people from the love of temporalities, and addict them to piety; if they be well perform'd. The same advantage proceeds from the *Government* of your Churches by *High Pastors*, to whom all preachers are subject; your *Sacraments* too cannot be doubted to be heart-melting Initia-

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tions, if the unseemly administration did not abate their force. Nor can any serious and penetrating head doubt, but the Tradition you discourſed of is the moſt connaturall, moſt ſtrong, and moſt infallible way that can be applied to mankind, both for receiving and continuing a practicall doctrine. Now all this being ſo, it is no leſſe evident, that nothing makes the people ſo faithfull and obedient, the officers ſo juſt and moderate, as piety and the contempt of this world; that is, nothing eſtabliſhes ſo happy and laſting a Government as a rationall and ſolid Religion. But when I have ſaid all this, I have not therefore ſaid your Religion is neceſſary for ſalvation, or that you are not very uncharitable in obliging others to embrace your tenets, under pain of damnation; or that either a Governour may not chuſe another more fit for his preſent occaſions, or a private man not live under the religion of his State, though it be not altogether ſo good as yours.

This was his anſwer; nor did I much reply, partly becauſe our diſcourſe had already been long, and partly for fear my weak bow ſhould not carry home to the mark: and I am glad I am retired to your ſafe gard, before I ventred further; wherefore I pray clear me theſe points, leſt I ſhould meet with another encounter, though I think ther's little danger of finding every day ſo ſmart, yet civil an Adverſary.

Uncle. You put me on a hard taſk, and peradventure more difficult to you then my ſelf. Therefore I muſt intreat you diſpenſe with the promiſe I made, of not drawing you to *Metaphyſicks*, though I ſhall endeavour to avoid them where I can: but if the nature of your queſti-

ons lead me into those intricacies, at your perill be it, who engage me so desperately. And to begin, pray tell me, *Cousin*, what conceive you is the End for which God put you in this life, and set you to run a race of so many years, from your Birth to your Death?

Nephew. I suppose you ask this question to introduce your further discourse; else you know well I have been taught, we are placed in this world to serve God. And if I misunderstand not my teachers, they tell me this is so evident in Holy Scriptures, that one cannot be a Christian and doubt of it.

Uncle. Very well: but have you thorowly penetrated into the true and solid sence of that ordinary expression? and fully satisfied your judgment.

SECT. 2.

How we are made to serve God.

DId you never reflect to what purpose those servants you every where see are hir'd and maintain'd? and by that consideration deduce your self into the knowledge of what *service* is?

Nephew. Though I have not before marked so much, yet now you put me in mind on't, it is evident enough they are design'd to doe such things as the Masters have need of. The men to plough and cart, and all kind of husbandry; the maids to cook and wash, and the like. Both sorts to wait and run upon all occasions which present themselvs for their Masters and Mistresses use.

Uncle.

Uncle. Me thinks, out of this anſwer I may gather, that *to ſerve* is as much as *to doe ſomthing needfull for him we ſerve.* And ſo indeed we uſe to ſay, *This ſerves well in this place*, or *for that end*, or *ſuch a mans turn*; and all ſignifies, that it is, or do's ſomwhat convenient to the thing or perſon it is ſaid to ſerve; that is, ſomthing wherof they ſtand in need. But if this be ſo, I ſee not how you can properly ſay, we are made to ſerve God, ſince he who is fulneſſe it ſelf, can want nothing.

Nephew. Why not Sir? for though it were blaſphemy to ſay or think he wanted the leaſt intrinſicall perfection, or any thing to maintain and conſerve what he poſſeſſes: yet doe I not ſee why we may not believe he wants the honour which his creatures give him, when he has it not. For ſeeing in its ſelf 'tis good, though an extrinſecall good; as we cannot but grant he has it not, ſo me thinks ther's no doubt but when he has it not, he wants it; otherwiſe he would not be the better for having it, and ſo it would not be his good.

Uncle. How eaſie it is to be deluded with the ſound of words! Conſider thoſe goods we call extrinſicall, as houſes, arms, lands, and mony, and even that honour, which you term an extrinſecall good to Almighty God, and ſee what all theſe are; you ſhall find them but inſtruments of ſome intrinſecall good; and not called *goods*, becauſe they are good, but becauſe they make or do us good. Houſes keep us from ill weather, Arms from Enemies, and all the reſt are only good, as they are ſerviceable to ſome neceſſity; and the good of Honour conſiſts in this, that it gives us pleaſure, when it makes us remember

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or conceit our ſelves better then others. So that to be an extrinſecall good, ſignifies ſomething which by its action removes ſome intrinſecall want, and brings ſome intrinſecall good; whence then he that can have no intrinſecall want, neither can he have any extrinſecall good. And, to look into the words; what can an extrinſecall good ſignifie, but a good or perfection which is not in us? that is, a good which is no good, as truly by induction you ſee it fals out: For what could it profit a man to have all the things above ſpecified, if he never apply'd them to himſelf, nor ever enjoy'd the intrinſicall good to which they are ordained;

Quo mihi divitiæ ſi non conceditur uti?

Nephew. I underſtand this very well, now you have explicated it; yet I ſee not but God receivs good by our ſerving him: for I have ever been taught, that our good actions pleaſe God, and our vices diſpleaſe him; therefore he receivs an intrinſecall content by our wel-doing, and a diſtaſt when we act amiſſe: yet would I not have you conceive me ſo unskilfull, as to think God changeable, or that this pleaſure and diſpleaſure comes to him at the inſtant when we do well or ill. But as he has the knowledge of what we wil do in every part of time; ſo alſo from all eternity he has this pleaſure or diſpleaſure, without any change or mutability. Since therefore our actions are the object of content and diſcontent to him, it ſeems clear to me that by our vertues we ſerve him, and by our ſins we offer him diſſervice; unleſſe you can inſtruct me better.

Uncle. You think then, God Almighty depends on our reſolutions for his pleaſure, and

and 'tis in our power to annoy him.

Nephew. Why not? as well as for his science and his Will. For 'tis a cleer case, he could not know what I would do, unless I would do it, nor desire efficaciously I should do such a thing, unless he first saw I would do it. If therfore he depend on our wills for his science and decrees, why should he not too for his content and pleasure? True it is, it founds hard me thinks to say we can annoy God by our ill behaviours; yet *Holy writ* pronounces it; and if we can please him, its evident to my eye, we may displease him.

Uncle. You say very truly, that, if we have power to procure him pleasure; by the same power we must be able to offend him. Since therfore God is no way's capable of Annoy; without question when 'tis said we please and displease him, those expressions must be taken in such a signification as both may be proportionably apply'd to him; that is, neither must be understood in the ordinary signification, in which we use them, when we talk of our selves. And as for the objections you draw from his knowledge and decrees, you are mistaken both in the things and in the comparison: In the things, because it is not true that God depends on us either for his knowledge or decrees; since they are the causes of all creatures, and the cause depends not on its effects, but the effects on the cause: and in the comparison, because though equally impossible, yet 'tis not so absurd God should depend of creatures for knowledge, as for content and discontent. For as it is manifest, that to annoy, argues in the agent a power over him that suffers the molestation, and that

irresistible, if not wholly, at least, with convenience: so to please and delight expresses a passiveness in the person contented in respect to the contenter: whence we have that phrase,

Trahit sua quemque voluptas.

And nature and morals testifie every one to be in a manner, chain'd and tyed by what he delights in; and as it were a slave to it. You see therfore to make God pleas'd or displeas'd imply's a more special expression of power and action over him; then being known has; and so is doubly absurd, in respect of the natures both of God and creatures.

Nephew. I confess my self unable to reply. Yet do I not yeild that we serve not God; because we can afford him neither profit nor pleasure: all this is not enough; for I see one, who performs anothers commands, servs him, though in so doing he be so far from bringing him profit, that he endamages him. Thus masters require of their servants to do what they are bidden, whether it prove well or prejudicial to them: only judging the wit and discretion of ordering businesses belongs to the Masters, and the servants duty reaches no farther then to promptitude and wariness in the execution.

Uncle. Neither is it my intention to perswade you we must not serve God, but to let you see 'tis not spoken in that sense, we use among our selvs. And your very objection conduces to its clearer explication: for the wife obeys her husband, Children their Parents, Subjects their Princes, Souldiers their Captaines; yet none of these are properly said to serve or be servants, but to obey. For whoever is subordinate to another, for his own interest, is accompted free; and

and he who is subject for his Masters profit, is properly a servant, the difference betwixt a servant and a slave consisting in this, that a slave is forced to work continually during his whole life for his Masters benefit without any advantage to himself: But a servant, by his own will for a limitted time, sels himself to such an imployment for his Master, and at the end expects his salary. In conclusion, this is common to both, to labour for the good of their Masters: so that seeing God commands us not to work for any good of his, we cannot, in this signification be said to serve him or be his servants.

Nephew. Excuse me, Sir: if I make one reply more, though it seems, even to my self, I ought to be satisfied with so much Evidence. But it runs in my head that, peradventure, God may command us certain actions, purely for his Wills sake, or to exercise the power he hath over us: Which if he do, 'tis most certain we are bound to obey him; how then can it be say'd we are not servants, if our actions proceed from such an obligation? For surely nothing more Lordlike and Masterly, then to command without a *Why*, nothing more servile, then to obey upon such terms.

Uncle. You say very well; that there is nothing more Lordlike, then to command without reason: but 'tis like those Lords whom our Saviour forbad us to imitate, who are as Lions in their houses, and esteem all the world born and made for them. And such we may indeed be bound to obey, but 'tis by misery not nature: As if one beats us who is stronger then we; Nature teaches us to bear it patiently as long as we cannot mend our selvs, for fear of worse: yet this

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is not according to nature in its true freedom, but in a malignant aspect of fortune: To come then to your reply, whether do you conceive God reasonable, nay very *Reason* it self in his nature and essence?

Nephew. Supposing you meane by reason, *understanding*, without confining it to the imperfections and the succession of discourse, I doubt not but God is as you say; and I should be impertinent to put you to prove it: yet have I not light enough to see my way in this question.

SECT. 3.

Whether God does any thing to creatures, or more to one then another, out of pure will or inclination.

Uncle. 'Pray then on what principle goes reason, when it resolvs on any action, or what does it ayme to be at?

Nephew. That also is plain, it designes some end, and considers some good out of the qualities wherof it chooses its action, he that will go a journey, seeks not a sheep to ride on, nor is any so ridiculous to buy a horse to feed his family. And so all that consult, propose some end or good to themselves, which is the principle wheron they build their discourse to come to their Conclusion, that is, the action they are to execute.

Uncle. Then, if God Almighty act rationally, and his command be his action, he commands nothing but with intention of some good, neither can he do otherwise under forfeiture of his being

being reason. *If* then he commands any thing for his will, or to shew his power, that must be some good. And what is good must be good to some body, either to God or the creatures: not to God, since you have already resolv'd he can have no temporal good: nor yet to creatures, because the objection directly excludes them. This then is most cleer, God can do nothing for his meerly will or to exercise his dominion over the world.

Nephew. I now acknowledge my folly in making this objection. For casting my Eyes on our own conversation, I see we blame wilfulness extreamly and account it an infallible mark of folly and use to upbraid women with it. And if reason be the nature and true property of man, whoever follows Will without Reason must needs *in that* be deficient from the excellency of man, and enclined to a beast, which is carried by natural impetuosity without knowledge. And therfore, when I see persons, otherwise discreet, accused of wilfulness, I suspect they are misunderstood, and either some reason they have, not discovered, or those who blame them, not capable of it; and so thorow rashness censure them; for sure nothing can be more contrary to true understanding, then to proceed wilfully and without reason.

Uncle. Since you are resolv'd of this point, I desire to know farther whether you think there be in God any greater inclination or love to one creature then another, wherby he may be carried to do beyond proportion for one more then another.

Nephew. Had not the former corrections made me warier then I was at beginning. I should have

have boldly answered, there is; for so *I* conceive the outward letter of the Scripture plainly delivers; and our preachers say God hates none of his works, but loves all, yet particularly they say he loves the Just. Of *Esau* and *Jacob* the Scripture teaches us he refus'd the elder and chose the younger, before either had done or good or bad: and how much he prefer'd the people of *Israel* for many ages, and how, for his own will only, he afterward brought in Nations, All the Bible is full of such mystical passages. But since you have told me, we do not serve God, nor please or displease him in the ordinary sense of the words, I dare not engage; for *I* know not whether here also there be not some hidden sense intended by these expressions.

Uncle. You have very great reason to be cautious. For the words of Scripture, as they are extream sweet and wholsome to such as read them with a simple and upright heart, so when they fall into the hands of those who will dispute, and have not sufficient learning to explicate them according to the received Rule of Faith, but beat their jarrings together in the pure bark of the words, they breed either gross errours or inextricable confusions. Therfore gather your wits together and consider if it be true, which you have already consented to, that God can do nothing but for some good, and again that he does nothing for his own good, seeing he wants none nor can have any but what he is in possession of from all Eternity, that of necessity what he does in creatures must be for their good. And the good of creatures being either *that* of the whole mass of them or of some particular, which is part of that

Mass

Mass, it followes plainly whatever he does, is directed to one of these two goods. And that if one of these two be his End, he has no particular inclination to any creature. For if he had, he would not aim at the good of the creature, but his own satisfaction, & so acquire an intrinsecal content which you have already declared impossible. And yet if he do any thing out of voluntary affection to any one, more then according to the proportion of its goodness, He must of necessiey have an inclination not totally governed by reason, and therefore not satisfied of it self, but to be satisfied by the Effect.

Nephew. I seem to see a glimmering of light in what you say, but do not perfectly discern it. First, if God prefer any creature more then according to its proportion; (which I perceive you consider two ways, that the good bestowed is compar'd either to the creature taken in its single selfe, or as it has relation to the rest of the world of which it is a part) this evidently follows, that God by his internal and essential properties, must have more comparison to one creature then to another, which seems absolutly impossible, as well because he can have no coordination to creatures, as that in an infinite distance (such as is between all creatures and God) it is impossible there should be more neerness in one then in another. God cannot therfore do more good for one then for another from any inclination in himself. All distinction then which God makes betwixt creatures must arise out of their own differences, whence it follows all will be in proportion to themselvs and nothing out of, or beyond it.

This I take to be one part of your discourse. The other

other, as far as I understand, supposes, if there be an inclination in God, there is a kind of desire or unsatisfaction till that inclination has its effect. And because this inclination is in God, from himselfe and not for any exigence of the creature, (since the good is supposed to be superproportioned to the creature,) therefore both unsatisfaction and satisfaction are internal; And so the intrinsecal good of God should depend on a Creature and God suffer pleasure from the (at least objective) activity of a Creature. Have I reached your meaning?

Uncle. You have, *Cozen*, and if you look well into it, 'tis no more then what you were satisfied in before, that God did nothing wilfully and without a reason. For since he does nothing for his own good nor without some good, that is, unless it be for the good of the creature. If there be no reason on the creatures side (as there cannot; if the good be superproportioned, for that signifies 'tis greater then the Creature occasioned) we must affirm it was done wilfully and without reason. But I pray, *Cozen*, reflect on the consequence and to what point we are arrived; If God have no other consideration in his actions then the good of the creature he produces, this seeming strange & hardy Conclusion, which perhaps you have not thought of, must necessarily be admitted,

SECT. 4.

That God does all things conformably to the nature of his Creatures.

Ephew. 'Tis truly so unexpected, I could imagine nothing less, since, if I am not mistaken

ſtaken, one of the poſitions uſually condemned in Heathens is, that God can do nothing beyond nature. And yet methinks you would draw me to that perſwaſion. For if God cannot do or command any thing but for ſome good and not his own, nor ſuperproportioned to the exigence of creatures, how is it poſſible he ſhould do any thing beyond nature. Nay it ſeems he cannot chooſe but do ſo much. Becauſe all the ends he hath, are the good of his creatures, he muſt of neceſſity do as well whatever is for their good, as themſelves: But they themſelves and what they exact, that is, what is good for them, makes nature: Therefore nature he muſt make, and more he cannot.

Uncle. I believe we ſhall not fall out about this quarrel. For, however the fear you have conceived, makes you not ſee it in this point, what I teach differs neither in thing nor terms from the ordinary opinion of the Schools, and Doctrin of Preachers. For the word *ſupernatural* which the Schools uſe, is not incompoſſible with that of *connatural*, both ſignifying conformable, or pleaſing, or beneficial, and befitting to nature, onely *ſupernatural* ſuppoſes alſo natures defects: which is all I intend to ſay; but for the preſent I deſire you ſhould reach into the true grounds of this poſition. Therefore, pray tell me, is the nature of Creatures firſt in themſelves or in Almighty God.

Nephew. I do not well underſtand you. For if your Queſtion be, whether God made all creatures of nothing, That's very clear: if you ask farther, whether ſince their nature proceeded from his gift, it was formerly in him, my anſwer

anſwer is ready, in the affirmative: for none can give what he has not. But when I conſider how an Engineer firſt projects in his own head a figure of the Engine which afterward he makes, and becomes, as it were Father of, methinks *I* ſee a kind of *being* of the Engine before *that* which the Engineer gives it. Yet no. For ſuch *being* is but *to be* in the Engineers head, and that, by much thinking, he frames within himſelf. So that 'tis evident creatures of neceſſity muſt have been in God, before they were in themſelves.

Uncle. You diſcourſe ſubtlely. But if you mark it well, the Engeneer often caſts many things in his head before he ſettles on one, and if you ask why he determins at laſt his choice to *this*, he will anſwer that in the reſt one part agreed not well with another, or were not, together, able to compaſs the End for which he intended his Machine; whence you may juſtly infer, the very work ſeems to move the Engineer, and to have a nature of it ſelf, which he rather acknowledges and accepts, then gives to his Engin. And to comprehend this the better, conſider the Engineer has ſeen for the moſt part all the ingredients he applies to his work, and himſelf confers, but the ordering and joynting of them. So that the Engin is nothing but a number of material parts, otherwiſe diſpoſed or applyed, and therfore rather found then made, by the Engineer. Is it ſo between God and his Creatures?

Nephew. You have given me ſo much light that *I* diſcover 'tis not altogether ſo between God and his Creatures, as between the Engineer and his *Invention*: there being no parts

in creatures wherof they are composed which exist not in God before they have any being in themselvs. For they can have none but from Him. Nevertheless I cannot conclude they have no kind of being of themselvs before that which they receive from God, for since God works by his knowledg, he sees first before he acts, which imply's a nature in the work whereby it may be seen, and that not made by Almighty God, because it cannot be after his sight, for his sight supposes it.

Uncle. I doubt not but you know, the first thing God Almighty sees is his own nature or essence, and so if creatures be esteemed virtual parts of his essence; which thorough his Science and Wil could distil into them without losing any thing of it self, you would easily perceive how creatures might be understood to be before the knowledge of God, and yet not before God by being in his Essence before their being in His knowledge. And this you will readily admit, if you but reflect, that since God has, or rather is in himself, the plenitude of all Being and Goodness, and creatures particular little beings and goodnesses, it is impossible they should be any thing, but as it were drops and contemptible atoms of that infinite Ocean which indivisibly and peradventure, unintelligibly, yet most certainly and unavoydably, cannot but befall them.

Nephew. This appears to me very high, yet as you say clear, and therfore I will not hinder your discourse, by making raw objections, but desire to know to what purpose you have been pleased to draw me into such sublime speculations.

Uncle. Do you not see, if all things be Gods very Essence, they must be there rank'd in their files and orders just as they are here below; so that whatever is among us, has its being here, because it has it there: and has it there, because God is what he is. So that God cannot dispose of any thing here, otherwise then it is, but he must change the rank it has there, that is, contradict and deny himself: And returning to our usual words, *Nature* (which we here call the things we see and contemplate, so ranked as they are) is as it is, because God is what he is, and because in him they have the same order they have here. Therfore Nature is Nature, because in him it is so. And as there can be no contradiction or opposition in him, but every thing agreeable and coherent one to another; as the parts of the Engin are in the Engineers head, when he approves and accepts them; So, neither here can He make any thing contradictory to Nature, but all conformable, and as the good of Nature requires; which is His sole end, from which to swerve were to miss the paths of his own Wisdom and Goodness.

Nephew. I cannot but applaud your Discourse, it has so pleasing and so attractive a Countenance; making such a beautiful and exact conformity betwixt God and his Creatures; and hanging this tottering Machin on such strong and unforceable Principles; But me thinks, your ranking things in the Essence of God savors too much of the Heathenish errour I have already hinted to you; and, unless you can furnish me with

SECT.

SECT. 5.

An Answer to three Objections against the former Doctrine.

I Will not believe mine own eyes, that what you have said can be true. For I have been taught, the Word of God is stronger then all Natural causes.

Uncle. I commend your resolution; For, no question, if we know once, God has delivered us any truth, we ought to contemn all demonstration and humane perswasions that dare contest its constancy; Nor, that any demonstration can be really opposite to what God has revealed; but, speaking as Schoolmen use, if, by impossibility, it should be admitted; Gods Word must clearly have the precedence: Which fashion of speech they take up, to compare the Vertues of the two Motives, not to suspect there can be any parting between them.

Wherefore, to come to your Objection; I fear you mistake the Errour of the Heathens, which consisted in this, that they confin'd Gods Omnipotence and Greatness or infiniteness of *Being*, to the proportion of the created Mass, imagining the *universe* or whole body of Creatures as commensurate to him, as a Tennis ball is to its cover, or to be a vessel to the water which fills it. So that, they understood God and the world to be co-dimensurate substances, like soul and body; (and some made no scruple even to call them so) or as the power and its adequate act or Action, and that the World was the measure of the utmost

extent of Almighty Gods power; which is to limit God, and, really, to take away his Infinity and Omnipotence, however they seem in words to grant him both. Now, the Christian Position is, That, considering His uncircled latitude of power, he can make infinitudes of infinite creatures; though peradventure, not any one Collection better and more convenient then this we are part of: and therfore, by his wisdom and goodnes, This only is ranked in him to the way of *Being*, all the rest filling the vast possessions of his not used Treasury.

Nephew. I doubt not but this is as you have explicated; however that's not the point which makes the greatest noise, but another you have not yet touch't. The Heathens deny'd God made the world *freely*, but by a constraint of nature: A Position, that, besides the wrong and injury to God, much diminishes his *love* to us; which is highly exaggerated by the consideration, that he *freely* affects us, without any inclination rising from the necessity of Nature.

Uncle. This point of *liberty* depends on the former. For could he do no more then he has, there had been no choice, and by consequence, no *liberty*, at least according to that sense wherin we ordinarily use this word in Scholastical disputes. But, supposing a vast Latitude of things in his power, it follows, when there was nothing but himself extant, he must be determin'd by himself to make these, and not others. Now, that which can determin *it self* to one of more, we call free, and say it has the power of chusing, which is *liberty*. And so you see the way I follow necessarily maintains, that God by his free choice and liberty, made this complex of creatures we call the *World*. *Neph.*

Nephew. Yes, but you suppose him so determin'd to it, that he cannot do otherwise under forfeiture of his Wisdom and goodness; which we know he can no more prevaricate, then his being God. Nay, you go farther, and place the determination in his very Essence, before his knowledge, and by consequence, before all liberty; which strangely takes off the edge and keenness of affections, whose principal whetstone is, that the gift be free, without any force or compulsion.

Uncle. You tell me of a Doctrin I have not, hitherto, understood and doubt I shall not be capable of, hereafter: That, to be free, one must be in case to lose his wits and goodness. Surely there is no freedom in God, at this rate; and every wise and vertuous man is so far remote from liberty, as he is constant and fix'd to reason and vertue. Such freedom, those who like let them keep to themselvs: I am content, for my liberty, When I see two things, wherof either may be done, out of Reason and Vertue to chuse the better; and, for the power to elect the worse, by swerving from Reason, I leave it to those who adore Liberty above Vertue. So that, if God chuse to make the world, because Wisdom (from which he could not *bias*) told him it was better then any other he could make, He has liberty enough to be a pattern to me; and I seek not to justifie any other in him. As, for what you say it was determin'd in his very Nature, before his Knowledge, to be best to create the world; you are a little mistaken: For 'tis one thing to affirm, the creatures were so ranked in Gods essence, as was most fit they should be in the World, and in their own Natures

tures; and another, that he was determin'd to do so, by his Essence; since his Essence and the ranging of things in it are but the Object of his Knowledge, which, finding this order to be best, determins God just thus to produce them.

But, above all, I wonder where you got this scruple, that the liberty of the action is that which so wheets affection: For me thinks, I see the quite contrary in the conversation of Lovers; some complaining of wise and rational love, and objecting, such know not what 'tis to love. I see loving natures taken with the demonstrations Dogs or other dumb creatures make to them of love; and that, in so high a degree, as they stick not to lose a friend, if he be injurious to such Cattle. Besides, in true reason, if love be a tye; to see another ty'd to one, must needs provoke a counter-love. But indeed, your self have open'd the cause of your errour; insinuating that love endears most when 'tis without force or compulsion; which is very true, for Fear and Love meet not together, in any high degree. Yet, I doubt you equivocated in the word *liberty*; which, if understood for an inward and natural *inclination*, without dispute flying directly at the object is most essential to Love and the very flower of it; But, if taken for a kind of *indifference*, determinable only by Judgment upon comparing of two, is meerly accidental and rather a diminishing of Love. And so we see the greatest Loves, as *that* of God the Father to his Son, of the Blessed towards God, and all rational creatures towards their wished Beatitude wants, nay, is uncapable of this condition.

Nephew. I am sufficiently inform'd of this Point;

Point; yet there is another comes into my mind, with ſo cleer an oppoſition to your Doctrin, that I ſhall hold it a great conqueſt, if you can overcome it. All Chriſtians acknowledge miracles, beſides a whole courſe of ſupernatural Qualities and Actions, which how you can draw within the compaſs of the exigience of Nature, I cannot comprehend; ſince the very names declare their irreconcileableneſs.

Uncle. I apprehend no ſuch difficulty as you ſeem to make; But, for all my forewarning, you are entrangled in words, and obſerve not the great difference betwixt *natural* and *connatural*: That, to be *natural*, ſtands not with being above Nature; but, to be *connatural* is common to both. Conceive therfore no fear of loſing your ſupernatural Qualities and Actions you ſeem ſo tender of: Rather look, whether your objection takes not a ſuppoſition ſomwhat unreaſonable; That nature needs nothing above its own power, which is ſo evidently falſ, I wonder your ſelf diſcover not the errour. For, is not God above Nature? yet what does Nature more want then Gods conſervation and his continual creation of Souls? I know you will tell me God does that as Author of Nature: But, I believe, he does all you call ſupernatural, under the ſame quality, that is, as noſtring Nature and ayming to bring it to perfection? What does Nature more exact, then to be brought to the end for which it was made and to which, by its very being what it is, 'tis proportion'd? This, firſt, is the ſight of God, and afterwards, whatever gifts are beſtow'd to bring us to this perfection; which when 'tis ſaid, all is ſaid whatever you can call either ſupernatural or miraculous.

lous. For, are not miracles necessary to bring men to Faith and continue them in it? even they then, are exacted by Nature, to bring her to perfection; she wants them and is miserable and imperfect whithout them. So that by this, you see, there remains no farther difficulty, then of the names of *Miracle* and *supernaturality*: As for the former, 'tis no more then wonderful, that is, from some unknown, that is, spiritual cause, whose operations we are unacquainted with: The other signifies only that Nature of it self, cannot reach to such an operation, or that it needs a special help of God to be made partaker of such a quality.

Nephew. Your inferences are very pleasant, and I conceive a great content to see how truth marches safe and unprejudiced among the files of enemie-falsities. I am not able to oppose what you say by any weighty objection, your arguments being not only strong and nervous, but of so comly and winning a complexion, as if, without evidence of their consequence, they would perswade me to believe them. But me thinks I walk in a wood, where I see my way no farther then I am gone. Wherfore, I beseech you tell me freely your intention, whither you mean to lead me; that I may have some light to guide my self forward: which I do not say, esteeming the Truths, you have already declar'd, not worthy my learning, but that I am absolutely conceited you have some farther design, then I yet discover.

Uncle. It is very profitable for a Schollar not to know what his Directour in Science aymes at: For, so long, he keeps his understanding free and unbyass'd, and admits, with sincerity

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and plainess the truths propoſed him, which are neceſſary for concluding the verity his Maſter intends to lead him into, and ſo the way becomes to him both ſhorter and eaſier; Whereas, when he knows what his Governour drives at, he naturally endeavours to keep that off, and forces him into by-diſputes, many times as intricate as impertinent. But the queſtion between us is now ſo far advanc'd, that 'tis time to open the bowels of it. And therſore, pray ſee whether it follows not from what is hitherto diſcuſſed, that God, if he be conſtant and true to his own principles, is bound to do in all occaſions what is beſt for his Creature, that is, what (conſerving their Natures and the natural Lawes of their manage and government) is fitteſt for them; and, which moſt particularly concerns us,

SECT. 6.

Whether God does not always what is beſt for man?

Ephem. Since 'tis reſolv'd, the only End of all Gods Works, here below, is their good and perfection, and again, that he cannot contradict Nature (its order being originally his own breaſt-thoughts, deeply rooted in his Eſſence;) By one, he is puſhed to the *beſt* for his Creatures; by the other, limited to do this according to the Subject he has to manage; though, at laſt, theſe two ſeem to meet in the ſame effect. For, the good of a Creature muſt of neceſſity be ſuitable to its inclination; and that either is what

what we call Nature, or at leaſt is made and nouriſh'd by what we call Nature, that is by the circumſtant cauſes and motions; thoſe, therfore, muſt alſo be connatural and agreeable; ſo that, beſt, is moſt comfortable to nature and by conſequence, ſtill according to the natural order.

Uncle. Add then to this; ſince Angels fortunes were compleated in an inſtant and what is acted by them is all concerning the aſſiſtance of us, we may without ſcruple aſſume (as far as is neceſſary for our Diſcourſe) that, whatever is now done, in or by other creatures, is intirely and only directed *finally* to the good of Man: and ſo contract the univerſal Propoſition, That God is bound to do the beſt for his Creatures, to this, That ſtanding to his own Principles, he is obliged to do in all occaſions what is beſt for mankind; conſerving the fore-ſetled general Law of not prejudicing the nature of his Creatures in common.

Nephew. You bind me to ſomwhat hard conditions, if you exact of me to believe, that all other Creatures are made for Man; all the Heavens, all the deſarts of the Earth, the great profundities of Sea and Land. And who knows but in the vaſt Orbs of our Planets, or thoſe maſſie candles that ſhine fixedly on us from above, (not ſo much to leſſen the outward darkneſs of the night, as ſo dart great thoughts of God Almighties infiniteneſs into our narrow and ſelf-smothered ſouls) there may be as excellent Creatures as Man, from whom we are ſo far from ever receiving any aſſiſtance, that we are never like to hear any news of them? yet becauſe, I fear, ſuch Queſtions may retard the courſe you drive on, I will forbear till your better leaſure.

Uncle.

Uncle. And I willingly accept of your civility: Only, I would not have you think I call *Mankind* precisely the seed of *Adam* or *Noe*; but all such creatures (if there be, any where, others) who are due to Eternity, and yet have their births couch'd under the shels of mortality: For to all such will agree the notion of *Animal rationale*, which definition our Philosophers have determin'd to man. But I desire further, whether we may not enlarge our former Conclusion to *individuals*, and say that God, on the same Principles, is oblig'd to doe the best he can for every particular man; conserving still the due respects to the general government of the *species*, according to the rules of nature?

Nephew. Your principle wil unavoidably drive its consequence so far. For he that keeps his ey steddily upon goodnesse alone must of necessity do what is or what appears best: And where there is no prejudice to the common, the good of the particular is truly good; and its best, absolutely best, not only to the particular, but to the common; since the good of the common is compounded of the good of every particular, and is so much better, as all particulars are better: Yet I am extreamly troubled to digest this morsell, which like slippery Brawn, jerks up and down my mouth, and will not finde the way to my stomack; 'tis so strange to what I have hitherto been taught.

Uncle. Though perhaps you have not so often doubled your reflexions, as to reach this point; yet I do not conceive you have been taught any thing contrary. Besides, 'tis a thought so becomming the goodnesse of Almighty God, that me thinks a pious and wel disposed soul should incline

incline its affection to reſiſh it; and tho'h there were ſome fear it might meet with oppoſition; yet ſhould not there want a deſire and labour to juſtifie and eſtabliſh it.

Nephew. It is ſo indeed: Yet when I caſt up with my ſelf how many periſh in darkneſſe, without ever hearing of Chriſt; when I conſider what wicked lives *Chriſtians* lead, when I reckon o're the wars and violences and oppreſſions of Innocents, the ſtrange misfortunes and tormenting diſeaſes which my eyes every where meet with in the world; and on the other ſide, ſee the remedy of all theſe diſorders fall within the great wiſdom and power of Almighty God; how is it poſſible, in the midſt of ſo many miſeries, I ſhould think he does the beſt for every one, when very many are in worſe condition then their enemies could wiſh? You know this objection is in every mouth, this Burr ſticks in every throat, and therefore *I* hope you will pardon me, if *I* interrupt the thred of your diſcourſe with it.

Uncle. I may pardon others, but not you; who, out of what I have already ſaid, and your ſelf conſented to, cannot but underſtand and ſee an obligation impos'd on God Almighty to conſerve Nature, as a web woven out of his own bowels, the ſhuttle of wiſdom running through, and ſtrengthning all the veins of it: So that he is bound to it, we may ſay, as to his own blood and off-ſpring. On the other ſide, you ſee that hateſull conceit of God Almighty's deſerting and puniſhing poor ſouls, meerly for his pleaſure, and to ſhew his power, baniſhed, as it deſerv's from him who is all goodneſſe; and the cauſe of our miſeries laid clearly on the defectuouſneſſe of

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our own Nature, and the material swath-bands of the circumstant world, so necessary to us, that we could not be without it; so brittle, and so relenting its *origin* from nothing, that even the Eternal Wisdom must either break all, and frame other new things instead of it, or, if he would create this world, he must endure in it the imperfections and breaches you mention. If he would make this World, he must let a child be the beginning of a Man, he must let an infant be the stock on which he was to graft wisdom; he must let the rude be in multitudes, and the wife thin sown, he must let the wicked be more industrious to slay and spoil, then the good to build and preserve; in fine, he must permit all the inconveniences you complain of, and even himself to be unjustly exclaim'd against for them.

Nephew. Did you only say, God had created all things in the *best* state they could receive in the course of this World, I should have been satisfied with your answer: but you reach at more, and venter to maintain, He did what was *best* for every particular in it self; which seems to me an inference so desperately incredible, that all your art can never recover it so so much as a probability, for how can we doubt, but he who is oppressed were *better* if reliev'd into a free condition, he that languishes with the Gout or Stone were *better*, if restor'd to a perfect health, the poor and miserable, who starve for want of bread, were *better* if furnisht with arms to defend themselves from the sharp darts of necessity?

Uncle. I may yet safely stand to my word, and therefore, once more I repeat it; *God has done best*

best for every particular, as farre as the order of the universal government bars not his liberality: nor are your objections so strong in themselves, or dangerous to my position. For, if we remember, Man is made for an *eternal* happinesse, we must not take our measures of *what is best for him* by the accidents that befall him here, wherin truly he is very little concern'd; but by the influence they have in relation to his future state, which is his principal and indeed only interest. If he that lies tormented on his bed with the *Stone* and *Gout* learn, by this exercise, the baseness and contempt of this world, and raise his soul to the admiration of the next: These bitter potions are but necessary and wholsom Physick, to recover and secure his health for all *eternity*; to which perhaps, he should never have arrived, or, at least, not to so high a degree of felicity, had not the merciful hand of God thrown him so low into those happy mischances. Can you doubt then, but these miseries, you so tragically exclaim against, are the greatest blessings Heaven could have given him; and consequently, his lot and portion more desirable, then if he were master of all the wishes the flattering tongue of a fond Nurse could heap on him.

But, I pray, what's your meaning, when you grant every one possesses the *best* circumstances he is capable of, by the course of nature thus settled; yet deny he has the *best* could possibly be bestowed on them? Doe you know any other World where he might be more happy? or, if he could have no Father or Mother, no Birth or Education, in any world but this; is not this *absolutely best* for him, which *in this world* is the *best* he could arrive to? But it seems, you fancy

a *Negro* might have been born *white*, a crooked *dwarf*, with a tall and streight body; you would have a *Lyon* without an *Ague*, and a *Fox* without a strong *scent*: not reflecting, if they had been made different from what they are, they had not been the same, but some other creatures, as the causes, which should have made them such, had been alter'd; and consequently, they never had advanc'd so farre towards being *happy*, as to participate even of *Being*. Again, if, after this birth, they had received any advantage, besides what they actually possess, the causes, which now act for them, must unavoidably have been chang'd, and the causes of those causes; so that, the very causes, necessary to their *being*, had not been the same, nor they ever so much as seen the Sun, but *others* in their places; which, surely none can affirm would be better for them.

Nephew. Somewhat perhaps might be reply'd to this (tho'n very plausible) discourse: but I will passe over what I conceive my own endeavours capable of finding, and only presse you with what no eye is so rash as to oversee. I will admit that, supposing what every one suffers in this world pronounce him for the next, your position is tollerable; but what shall we say of those Infidels or unhappy Christians, whose afflictions in this life end into everlasting paine, and are but, as it were, the leaders and conveyers of them to eternal misery? Certainly you cannot deny, but it had been better for such never to have been; nor do your Principles furnish me with any excuse to justifie God for making them; tho'n indeed, if he could have given us a *contented life here*, to be the passage to a glorious eternity hereafter, why

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was he not *ev'n so mercifull?*

Uncle. You lead me far from my intended design, into sublime and perplex'd questions, which require whole daies of discourse to examin and resolve. But; to give you some reasonable satisfaction (as far as the time permits.) *I* ask, first, who can assure us, that any misery we endure in this world does not, to its degree, avail us in the next; either by hindring us to deserve greater evils, then our present course wil bring upon us, or allaying the desires of this life, and taking us off from so eager a pursuit of worldly contents, and a thousand other waies, which a diligent considerer will easily finde out?

But what must *I* answer to the main inconvenience, that some fail of that End, without which nothing in this World has truly any sweetnesse or comfort; the sad and frequent miseries overweighing all that can be called good in this life, if we support not our hearts with the hope of a better? *I* see this position, we endeavour to sustain, assaulted by whole troops of opposers; who fortifie themselvs with a strong conceit of Gods Omniporence, not moderated with the reyns of his Prudence and Wisdom. *I* see, what (through a partial and overweening esteem of our own nature) we speak for *our selvs*, we strive to palliate by fathering all upon *Gods goodnesse*, and that pride and self-love wil not permit us to acknowledge we are but contemptible Creatures, for whom 'twere too great a boldnesse to expect the adamantine knots of *nature* should be dissolv'd. Lastly, *I* see a torrent of prejudicate Opinions concerning the *state* of the next world (only in common

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figur'd to us, and whereof we know nothing clearly and particularly) running against me; which I must avoid, by gliding quietly through the waves, and giving them their free and natural course, whilst I retire to the advantage of some Promontory; and there, looking round about upon the vast Ocean of Gods unsearchable Providence, call in my ranging thoughts with this humble check and submissive admiration, *O altitudo!*—And therfore I shall rather chuse, by inculcating to you the great *maxim* of Gods bounteous disposition, to confirm your heart in common, that it cannot fail to carry its strength into Eternity, and even Hell it self: then, by presuming rashly to search into the knowledge of Gods deep secrets, either to precipitate my self, by shortnesse, into apparent absurdities, or, by prolixity, into unseasonable enquiries of hidden and undiscoverable difficulties.

Nephew. This Point seems, indeed, to require more consideration, then either my slow brains are capable of, or these distracted times fit for: and therfore, (unlesse it be necessary to your intention) for my part, Ile suspend my pressing it any further, till I shall be better able to pierce into so deep a mystery; in the mean while, acknowledge it in order to our present businesse, and so intreat you to proceed in your advice.

SECT. 7.

Whether God in his Wisdom could have given us other Laws?

Uncle. Methinks, then, it follows, out of what we have agreed on, that the Com-

mandements Almighty God has given us are so determin'd, even to himself, by his Wisdom and Goodness, that they could not be other then what they are. For, having concluded, he alwaies does the *best* he can for the good of mankind, and the *best* to be that which is most conformable to *Nature* and produces its greatest perfection; what question can there be, but the Precepts of God are most agreeable to *Nature*, and most conducing to its improvment? Especially, since His all-seeing ey penetrates exactly both all the circumstances of It, and the blisse for which it is created; he must necessarily know by what steps and degrees we are most easily and securely led on to this felicity. Whence, we may safely infer, His commands can be no other, then of such actions as *connaturally* elevate us to our supream end and happinesse.

Nephew. You proceed plausibly, if the grounds on which you build, prove true and solid. For, first, you suppose there is a *best*, among those means of bringing mankind to blisse, out of which God is to make his Election: and this will not easily be granted by many. But (what is more important) you seem to imply ther's a *connatural* way to Heaven; wheras, the common estimation of Christians places Blisse so far beyond all we do in this life, that ther's no connexion betwixt them; otherwaies then because the sole *Free-will* of God appoints those actions, to which, out of pure bounty, He is pleased to give such a reward.

Uncle. 'Tis easier to put objections, then to resolve them: I must therfore intreat your patience to divide these two, and handle them singly. To your first, I reply, that the being of no *best*,

best, among the Objects of Gods choice, may happen two ways; One, when there are some, though clearly better then the rest, yet so indifferent among *themselves*, that there is absolutely (all circumstances consider'd) no ground to prefer one before th'other. And in this case, I demand, when God chuses or prefers One, does He find a reason for such preferrence? If you say yes, you crosse the case in question: if no; 'tis evident God in such election, works not by Reason (which nevertheless is acknowledg'd to be his essence,) and his Will must be put not only irrationall, but larger then his Understanding, as reaching to some action, of which this falls short. The second way of *no best*, may be imagin'd, that Infinite means offer themselvs to Almighty God for bringing Mankind to bliss, among which not one is found so eminent, but still there appears another better; yet of these, you conceive, God selects one. Against this way I presse, by taking a *better* then that which God has chosen, and then demand why He preferr'd not *that*, since more reason favor'd it? But to make the case so palpable that you may touch it with your hand, let us take away and abstract (in our understanding) from this later Good *the excesse* it has over the other; when because by this, they now remain purely equal, God can no more chuse betwixt those two, then he could in the former case; and so by the first instance 'tis evident, he could not prefer that which he is supposed to have chosen: Let us then adde, the inequality he took away; and, because that *excesse* determins God to elect what he sees to be *better*, it will be far more impossible and absurd He should settle his choice upon what is *lesse*

worthy, then where the motives of election are in a perfect equality.

Nephew. I told you this point was not of such importance: Neither did I offer it, as my own opinion; but from others, whom I have heard maintain it with great fervour and earnestness. But, the later objection I believe will give you a harder imployment: For, as far as I understand, it is the general way of all Divines, as well *Protestant* as *Catholick*, and universally follow'd by all Christians, of what side soever.

Uncle. The proceeding orderly from one point to another has a great force to lead us into Truths, hidden from the eyes of those, who, having no stairs to mount by, never get higher then one step from the ground; But, any question being proposed them, by a sudden cast of their fancy and occurrent probabilities, they presently fall upon a resolution close by the very doubt. Now therfore pause a little and reflect on what you say, *The actions we do in this world, for gaining Heaven, have no other connexion with the reward to be obtain'd, then by the sole Will of Almighty God*; which, in my apprehension, is both contradictory to the plain letter of *Scripture*, where, *Our tribulations* are said to *work in us an eternal weight of glory*, and inconsistent with reason; since (if consider'd in common) it manifestly evinces that infinite actions, quite of another kind, might as well have been appointed for this end (as, to turn *Sysiphus* his *Stone*, or fill *water* to the *Danaides*) and this again implies that God was to chuse out of a pure indifferency, what conditions he would annex to the obtainment of bliss; all, but those he should please to appoint, being absolutely impertinent, where,

where, you see us fallen into the former inconvenience, of making God act without a reason.

Nephew. Though I said there was no connexion betwixt our works and their reward; yet I deny not, the actions appointed us are more convenient to the condition of our life here, then others: so that, though there be no choice in them, if we strictly consider the end; yet there may be, in respect of the Subject, which is to be convey'd to that end.

Uncle. I will not contest about your words, but give you free liberty to alter them as you please. Only I would have you remember, if Nature and its order and administration be intirely made for the end of Bliss, that which has no connexion with Bliss can have no connexion with the Nature fram'd for that end. Which leads us into a more important consideration, in reference to this point; That, as nothing can be more absurd, then to say, a *Beetle* was made to *knock*, or a *knife* to *cut*, and yet deny there is any operation of a *Beetle* proportion'd to *knocking* or of a *knife* to *cutting*: So, it cannot stand with any shew of reason, to say, The sight of God is the end, for which man was created, and is so many yeares, conserv'd in this World; yet, no action, proper to him, has connexion or proportion to the sight of God.

Again, if it be true we discours'd before, that Nature is in Gods own *Essence* ranged and ordered *as it is here*, and Bliss the end of Nature, for which it was made; we must needs acknowledg there was a connexion betwixt Nature and Bliss, in God, *antecedently* to his understanding of either of them: But whatever has connexion, by *will* only, must of necessity presuppose under-

understanding; wherfore, the connexion betwixt Nature and the sight of God and the means wherby Nature is to attain its ultimate end, *Felicity*, are order'd *naturally* and not meerly out of *Will*: For, the connexion of our nature to bliss, either includes or infers the means to obtain it.

And truly, if there be not a connatural way, for Man to aim at the happiness he is design'd to, why was this life given him? why was this vast machin of the material world created? Had it not been much better to have immediatly produced those, on whom he intended to bestow his sight, in an actual fruition? why does he venture so many to damnation, meerly for his *will*? doth he take delight in it? 'Tis doubly blasphemous, to say he receivs *Pleasure* in creatures, and that in their ruine. Is it to shew his greatness? 'Tis both, in it self a folly, and in him servs to no content. But I am too prolix upon t'his (though very excellent) speculation; since I can refer you to that singular Book of *the Immortality of the Soul*; in which the noble Knight and glory of our Nation, Sir *Kenelm Digby*, has gone beyond all Pens that ever labour'd on this subject before him: There you shall find it demonstrated, by the Principles of Nature, that, *In the next world we shall be happy or miserable, out of the works we exercise in this*: And thongh he does not specifie, in what consists our Beatitude, because he would not trench upon Divinity; yet the same Principles (were they carried on but one step farther) will convince, that our actions here, are proper and connatural dispositions of our Soul, to the sight of God hereafter. However, so much as he has deliver'd

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is abundantly sufficient to satisfie any diligent and ingenious enquirer, that this great *Verity* is as demonstrably certain, as incomparably excellent.

Nephew. I have heard much in advantage of *that Book*, from many, of solid and impartial Judgment, who have thorowly perus'd it; and indeed, their frequent and earnest recommends begot in me a great desire of tasting, at least, what I saw them profess to have found so full both of Relish and Substance; But when they told me I must chew it no less then twice or thrice over, and that with all the strength I could possibly apply, else *I* was never to expect either delight or nourishment; my appetite was quickly diverted, to entertain it self with certain *quelques choses*, of a prettier tast and easier digestion. Yet *I* could wish himself or some other (if any can so sweetly unite his strength and cleerness) would distil it into pure spirit and Quintessence, which by its more agreeableness to such weak stomacks as mine, might perhaps fortifie us to venture on the whole.

But, you must not carry the Bayes so easily in this Point; there remains still one difficulty to grapple with. I have been taught, some commands are given us from God, because they are conformable to Nature; Others, meerly because 'twas his pleasure: And these *I* conceive, may be such as concern the *Sacraments*, keeping of *Sun-dayes* &c. to which we may add all the *Ceremonies*, commanded the *Jews* in the *old Law*: For who can believe, that, by Nature it self, so many strange and unconnected actions should be required to salvation? surely, none will offer at so odd a position, but your self.

Uncle.

Uncle. The difference of Commands, you mention is frequent enough among Divines: but, not to be understood of the Nature of the things commanded, in themselvs, but in respect of us, wherfore, to take this distinction in a true sense, we must devide the Precepts of God into two several kinds; some have so neer a connexion with the Nature of man, that our selvs can discover the prejudice we incur by disobeying them; Others there are, whose influence upon our affections is so remov'd and hidden from us, that we can retrive no reason of their necessity more then *because God enjoyns them*: As for example; why *Water* should be used for our *matriculation* into the service of God in *Baptism*, we cannot discern any forcible necessity: But God, who, without labour or time, survey's and casts up all proportions between Nature and the circumstant World, can easily resolve that, all things consider'd, this is absolutely most fit, and therfore, in respect of him who is incapable of defect, the only means to be commanded for reception of Human Nature to life everlasting. As for the Ceremonious Lawes: we are to reflect the *Sinagogue* is compared to the *Church* as *Children* to *Men*: and, as we provide painted Birds and Pipes or Drums, that only make empty shews and noises, to entertain those little Souls with, so was it convenient God should govern so gross and heavy a People, by *carnal Ceremonies* and promises of *temporal blessings* suitable to their inclinations and efficacious allurements of them to the love of God and the performance of those actions that truly brought them to Heaven; which was even then, no other then *Faith* and good *life*. This being the condi-

condition of the Jewes, those forms and actions, we now account bables and frivolous, were very available to bring them to bliſſe: and God, whoſe infinite wiſdom conſider'd all their circumſtances, their materiall diſpoſition, their comming out of *Egypt*, their living among *Gentils*, who preſt them, by example, by commands, by rewards, to follow their vice and Idolatry, choſe, out of ſo many *metaphoricall* actions as were within proportion to their nature, the very prime and moſt effectual towards the end he aym'd at, of conſerving them in *vertue* and the *faith* of a future *Mediator* and *life eternal*: tho'h our weak eys cannot carry ſo far, as to diſcern every particular ſtep of the way, wherin the Providence of God conducts his creatures.

Nephew. This laſt paſſage has open'd to my underſtanding the Reſolve of a Queſtion I have long deſir'd to be ſatisfied in: If the Gommandements of Almighty God be ſo determinated by his Wiſdom, that they could be no other then they are, I conceive

SECT. 8.

The way to Heaven muſt neceſſarily be but One.

OF which who miſſes, whether by his own fault or no, ſhall certainly fail of ſalvation; As he that takes not the true Road to *London*, whatever be the cauſe of his errour, will aſſuredly never come thither. Not that I condemn them to an equall degree of unhappineſſe; for I both believe and tremble at that dreadfull Truth:

Truth, *He that knows his Masters will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; He that knows it not, and does things worthy of punishment, with few*; yet suffer he shall the sad effects even of his inculpable mistakes.

Uncle. Then I hope you see your subtle Disputant was grosly deceiv'd, when he thought God could give salvation for as little as he pleased: For tho'h his speech be true, if we reflect, nothing can please God but what is according to reason, and he cannot be pleased with more then one, if His reason can chuse *but one*; yet I doe not think, your self or any in the company understood so curious a Wit to make such an equivocall opposition. Another sence, then, there is of the same words, That divers means were propos'd to God before he resolv'd on any; whereof the Spark expected his goodness should make choice of the easiest, conceiting, as your self did, there was no connexion between serving God and the effect which proceeds from it, *our reward*. This, now you see, can be no waies true, without concluding God *wilfull*, acting where he sees no reason; without concluding the whole machin of *Nature* useless, and the ingrafting of supernatural things on the stock of nature, violent and altogether improper to the root that bears them, which must needs be the effect of an unskilfull workman; Lastly, without renouncing our own eys, by which we so clearly see all Gods commands to be rational, to be the fittest way of improving our nature to its utmost perfections, to be purely an act or discipline to draw us from the love of temporall follies, and fix our hearts on eternall joys, such as are truly most conformable to intellectuall natures, all the

all the *activity* of a spirituall substance being *in its will.*

Thus has the infinite goodness and wisdom of God Contriv'd all his Commands into a resemblance of *Jacobs ladder*, that reach'd from Earth to Heaven; by which our Souls may connaturally climb up to their desired perfection and reward. Yet, still me thinks, I read a scruple in your looks, as if you were not fully satisfi'd, as if you still wanted a present and ready reply: But I'm confident, if you repeat the Principles we have laid, you will find our deductions perfectly conclusive.

Nephew. First, you have taught me, God had no interest in making his Creatures, but purely for their good; which conteining two branches, the good of the *whole* Mass and of every *single* individual, the good of a particular ought to yeild to that of the general; and therfore God (who cannot be wilful) cannot prefer any single creature beyond its proportion, according to the scituation and circumstances it possesses in the univers; but his goodness abundantly enriches every one with any good he can, not repugnant to the frame and order of the rest of the World. You told me farther, this order was so rooted in God, that, without forfeiting his wisdom, he could not break any joynt of his work; Nay, that because Creatures were but participations of Gods *Essence*, this very rank of Creatures could not be in them, if it were not eminentially in the very Essence of God; so that God should contradict his own Essence and be opposite to himself, if he changed any thing in the Creatures: And applying this to the wayes by which he leads men to salvation, they must

of neceſſity be ſuch as are traced out to him by the neceſſities of our nature; that is, ſuch as are the moſt fitting, the moſt ſweet and efficatious. So far I ſee very evident; and gueſs theſe wayes are but one, but me thinks it is not yet ſufficiently clear'd to me.

Uncle. Perhaps you ſtumble at the word *One.* For if we look narrowly on the divers paths divers men are led in, we ſhall finde many waies to Heaven; But, if we reflect, that, though men be many, yet they agree in *one Nature*, all the individuals uniting into *Man-kind*, we ſhall eaſily perceive, even theſe divers waies meet all in the notion of *one way.* In a word, I intend to ſay no more then that the Nature of man has a certain means to be wrought up by to its End, *viz.* the Love of God and Bliſſe; which is, by having the motives of the Love of God fitted to the imperfections of Nature. This I conceive, is done by the beleif of the adored Myſteries of the *Trinity*, *Incarnation*, the *B. Sacrament*, the eſteem of *Saints*, fear of the day of *Judgement*, and eternal pains, hope of the *ſight of God* and everlaſting *Beatitude.* And again, by being ſet and directed to certain actions, proper to conſerve and nouriſh in us the efficacy of theſe motives; whereof the firſt is, the belief of the *Infallibility* of the Church, then the great eſteem of *Paſtors*, next, the *Sacraments*, and laſtly, keeping of *Feaſts*, *Faſts*, and prayers for the *dead.* Theſe all, and the like, being planted in the Church by *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, make *one generall* way, that is, the *only fitteſt* for reducing *mankind* to Beatitude: tho' every ſingle perſon is not oblig'd to help himſelf of every one of theſe, ſo long as he injures not others, nor prejudices the main frame

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of the Church; which embracing so great a multitude of Professors and diversity of occasions, has need of all and every one of them.

Besides, if you consider, the wayes of Bliss are not arbitrary, but determinate to *one*, by the wants of Nature and its possibility; you wil easily conclude, As, though divers Children are taught divers *Grammars*, and have divers Books read to them, and divers exercises prescribed, yet the method of teaching can be but one, since the Tongue to be learned is but one, and the Translations out of and into the same languages; so, because the nature to be perfected in every man is the same, the end to which 'tis to be brought the same, and the vertues to be practised the same; likewise the *way* to Heaven can be but *one* and the *same*. And, as our Saviour says, he came *not to destroy but fulfill* the Jewish Law, and instanced in Murther and Adultery &c. So must we understand, the law of *Nature*, which God has planted in our hearts, is to be filled up, not alter'd, by the Gospel of Christ; that is, to be refin'd and augmented, to be kept in a greater rigour and perfection, and to receive excellent improvements and advantages by supernaturall instructions; nor to be quite changed into another Law. Wherfore as the *Law of Nature* is but one, so the *Gospel of Christ*, which is planted on it, can be *but one*: which, if well observ'd, will infallibly bring us to Salvation; if not, our own works wil throw us into irrecoverable infelicity.

And now I hope both your doubt is clear'd, and the reason, why the *way* to Heaven can be but *one*, sufficiently established. For, humane nature being but one, its defects must be the same in all; the same, I mean, as our nature is the same

same, that is, like, or proportionate: and *Religion* being nothing but the supply of these defects, and as it were *a body* of receits, prescribed by God to cure the wounds our *Nature* receiv'd by *Originall sin*; 'tis clear (especially since the prescriptions of so wise a *Physician* must needs be suitable and proper for the disease) what *unity* is found in *Nature*, the *same* or proportionable must be in its remedies, that is, in *Religion*.

Nephew. You have now brought me up to the top of the Hill, whence me thinks I easily discern *one great Road*, and that *but one*, leading to Heaven; all the rest (except they fall at last into *this*) being so many *by-wales* only to the Chambers of death. And I begin to pitty *my young Gentleman*, who now I see, with all his fine discourse, was deceiv'd in his Conclusion, as well as in his Principle: For, if the path to Heaven be but one, let the cause be what it will why we embrace it not, the sequel is still the same, *we shall never come there.* May I rely on this? 'tis a position so surprizes me, I dare scarce believe my own eys.

Uncle. I wonder you should ask such a question; Is any thing more clear, more demonstrable? then, if there be but one means, you must either take *that*, or fail. Besides, run over the actions of Nature and Art, you'l find them all go by certain determinate wales, which if they misse, 'tis impossible they should ever come to perfection. Look on the vast City of *London*, and all the *Companies* of Merchants and Artizans; consider the ingenious Professions of *Painting*, *Musick*, *Architecture*, &c. and the grand Master-Craft of *Governing* a multitude: see whether they have not certain Rules and Principles, cast, as it were

were into a beaten road, to arrive at their ends; and, if any misse of them, whether his works do not fail as wel as his waies. Only *that*, wherin to miscarry is the greatest and most irreparable fault of all, men, as if they were mad, wil perswade themselvs may be securely attain'd, without knowing the way to it: A presumption so palpably absurd, that I wonder how the strongest and most bewitching charms of profit or pleasure can have Magick enough to lull them asleep into so dangerous a Lethargy.

Nephew. Certainly 'tis scarce credible any can be so senceless. Hap'ly therfore, this miscarriage is not to be imputed to negligence, but to a pious conceit; that few things are necessary to be known or done for the attainment of blisse; the mercy of God being so great, so infinite, that he has left an easier way of comming to Heaven, and being happy, then of going to the *Indies* and becomming rich: a knot too hard for my fingers to unty, but I think it depends on this *Quære*,

SECT. 9.

Whether the Articles of Faith be few or many?

Uncle. I doubt you have not much mended their case. What can be more unreasonable, then to expect the greatest goods should be obtain'd with least endeavours? the very *Proverb* assures us, 'tis a Dictate of common sence, that *what is glorious is difficult*, and even the Heathens, whose meaning is rational, tho'h their phrase be erroneous, could say, *the Gods sell nothing without*

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ſweat. But if we look particularly into the bottom, we ſhall more evidently diſcern the folly of ſuch a poſition. For, let us enquire of our own hearts, what this is which our actions here, are to obtain hereafter? and the wiſe ones will tell us, 'tis our laſt End or *finall Good*: asking then all Philoſophers who have written whole Volumes on this ſubject, what they mean by *laſt End*, they unanimouſly agree, 'tis *that good which ought to be the ultimate aim of all our actions*; So that, if any were ſuppoſed to live perfectly, he ſhould not let paſſe the leaſt circumſtance of his life, without intending this end, and applying all his endeavours exactly to that effect. How then is it poſſible to imagine an Art, that extends it ſelf to the circling of all our actions, which have ſuch infinite variety and multiplicity in them, can be comprehended in ſome few doctrines? Let us caſt our Eyes on the morall precepts of *Cato*, *Theognis*, *Phoſilides*, *Ariſtotle*, or, if you pleaſe, on the *Proverbs* of *Solomon* or the Son of *Sirach*; and ſay the leaſt of any of theſe Books were the Rules neceſſary to be known, in order to the right guiding our lives to that chief good: you ſhall find them far more numerous then the points controverted in Religion. How can we then expect, the things neceſſary for government of our ſouls to our finall End can be ſo few, as ſuch cold and neutral complexions deſire to make them?

Beſides, conſider the ſhort number of thoſe we call *prudent* and *diſcreet*, who yet are no other then perſons able to carry on their ordinary converſation in a reaſonable way; and from thence collect, what variety of Precepts is neceſſary to the perfect conduct of ſo many ignorant

taint ſouls, in the difficult path of a Chriſtian life. Add to this, Chriſtians are not only to be govern'd *Idiotically*, in their ſingle perſons, but multitudes and whole Nations, in one community: in which kind of Sociality and civil living together, many Laws and practices are requiſite, more then in a private life. Laſtly, the end we aim at is the *ſight of God*, a ſpiritual and abſtract good; a good not to be communicated or experienc'd til the ſtate of our ſoul's ſeparation from the body, a good of a life totally different from all we either know, or can well gueſſe at; and out of all theſe, you will eaſily by your ſelf gather, the knowledg of the means to attain this end muſt of neceſſity be quite ſtrange, difficult, and new to us, and therfore a great temerity to ſay 'tis very ſhort, and few precepts requir'd to it.

Nephew. If I miſremember not, I have heard you at other times ſay, Chriſtian Faith was *ſhort and eaſie* to be carried on by *Tradition*: now you ſtretch it to ſuch a length, it ſeems impoſſible ſo great a variety ſhould either be intirely receiv'd by the preſent or deliver'd to ſucceeding generations.

Uncle. Not I, but St. *Bartholmew* (as is recorded by St. *Denis*) deliver'd this doctrin, that *Theology*, or the knowledg of God, *is the ſhorteſt* and *longeſt of Sciences*. Read over the *Apoſtles Creed*, nay even the *profeſſion* of *Faith* by *Pius quartus* (now in uſe among us, for receiving *ſtrangers* into the Church;) you ſee how few lines ſuffice to contain the largeſt of them, *this* being but, in a manner, double the former: Wheras, if you have leiſure and capacity to peruſe the great volumes of *Councils* and *Fathers*,

your own labours will teach you how copious and immense the same Catholick doctrin is.

This seeming contradiction arises from the nature of corporeal things, and of our Soul incarnated and puzled with fancys and affections. Anatomize the Body of a man: how few are the precise *actives* or immediate instruments of *reason*, in comparison of his whole bulk? they being contain'd in the Brain, or at most the Heart, with the slender threds that connex those two: Now, all the rest of us is the *very man*; yet as it were, not *he*, but a Mass of necessaries to him. So, is the Metaphifical substance of *Christian Religion* short and compendious, as we have declared; but the full explication of it large, beyond imagination. How soon is it said *Love God and your neighbour*, which (for any thing we know) may bring som few to Heaven: Yet, if we diligently examin the motives and actions which are a kind of descant upon that plain ground, The *Bible* and *Fathers* and *Councels* are nothing else but running division upon those five words. Of which the reasons I conceive may be these.

First, Christian life, both in common, as it belongs to a multitude and in special as to single persons, must be taught and inculcated, particularly and familiarly, with a discreet and tender complyance to every ones humour or infirmity; as we see in the method of the Bible, still producing both precepts and examples: Otherwise we should soon find the inconvenience noted by *Aristotle*, that *common propositions in morals are airy.*

Another cause may be deriv'd from the vexation of *Hereticks*, who, by divers slights, go about

bout to take away the true Faith of Christ; somtimes pressing equivocal words, under whose shadows they shelter a perverse sense, somtimes pretending they differ not in substance, but *de modo*, and when you examine it, their *Modus* is, Whether it be *truly or Metaphorically* the thing we speak of? By reason of such impertinent oppossers, the truths or propositions, necessary to be known, become multiply'd; and this unavoidably, as often as the unhappy occasion enforces it. And though *Hereticks* fill and wain, like the Moon, and so the method of opposing them changes aspect to the eye of the Common people; yet it remains perfectly the same amongst the learned who stay not at the appearances, but penetrate to the substance and marrow of what they speculate.

A third multiplication proceeds from Mans nature, which by various combinations of a few Principles, can weave long webs of unexpected Conclusions. Hence spring the great Tomes of St. *Thomas* and other famous Divines, who, by their learned labours, have elucidated and improv'd the Christian belief: Nor is this way of encreasing the bulk of Divinity confinable to any limits, but, after a thousand additions, still capable of new enlargements. 'Tis true, an assent to every one, nay, to the greatest part of such deductions, is not requir'd from the *generality* of Christians: but, for *Divines* whatever position would, if admitted, infer a falsity in *Faith*, ought by *them* to be rejected as a fundamental errour, and the contrary (though, in its nature, but a Theological conclusion yet) maintain'd as a necessary Truth.

The last extension of Faith is occasion'd by

such writings as have the credit of *infallibility*; the Holy *Scriptures*, consent of *Fathers* &c. For, whatever our Divines think evidently contain'd in any of these, presently they rank in the files of *Necessario credenda*. Thus you clearly see whence it grows that we say *Faith* or *Divinity* is very large, and how easily the little Mystery of its being long and short at once is unriddl'd. Besides, the terms we use in this dispute are purely respective. If in our Horizon three Suns appear, we gaze and wonder at their multitude; if thirty Stars, we complain of their paucity: So, such scant Christians who, under the name of few, touch perhaps one or two Articles, are over-charg'd with twelve, as too excessive a number; Wheras they, who call many, only, when you load their Stomacks with whol Books ful of divinity, will contentedly digest four and twenty. So ambiguous and deceitful are our words, if we be not very cautious both in the use and understanding of them. And, here again; you see your witty Disputant, for want of distinguishing his own words, catcht in a *Sophism*, instead of being convinc'd by a fair argument.

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CONCLUSION.

Ephem. I submit to your reason; and yet me thinks, 'tis a sad case any should be punish'd for not knowing the Law, when 'tis so long and hard to be learnt. *I* hear some protest they have often enter'd upon the enquiry, with all the indifferency they could; they *ask* and *seek* and *knock*; yet (if the Catholick be the *only Religion*) they receive no answer, they find not the truth, they see the Gates of Heaven still shut against them.

Uncle.

Uncle. If one were set in a *High-way* by his Friends, who all assur'd him that was the straight and only *Road* for the Voyage he intended: and, soon as his Friends were out of sight, he should frame fancies to himself; that, in this way, there were *Ditches* not passable, *Theives* to rob him, wild *Beasts* to tear him in pieces; and begin to take over *Hedges*, run into *Forrests* and intangle himself among *Thickets*, to seek out the right way; protesting all this while he did what he could to return to it and bemoaning himself, he could not find it, whilst *the great high-way* were all this time within his sight: Think you this seeker deserves any other pitty, then for being out of's wits; and, suppose him never so little less then a mad man, is not all the disasters can happen to this desperate Bedlam a just punishment of so intollerable an obstinacy?

Now *Cousin*, consider our Country men, who continually see the *Catholick Church* by their side (which is the Kings royal way to Heaven) and confess their Forefathers (some thousand years) ever lived in it since their conversion to Christianity; till, now of late, they have taken up an imagination to themselvs, that she teaches Idolatry and superstition, and, upon this accompt, abominate their ancient *Mother*, break all the *Laws* of God and nature, by which they were bound to obey her, and run their heads into the *Thicket* of unknown and not understood words (never written in their own language,) to find out the right way to Bliss: Is this any sad condition, unless it be that men should be so ungrations and wilful? To what purpose are their Protestations and prayers, whilst they continue this

this obstinacy; especially since they know the *old way* and see themselvs cast into doubts and ignorance by the new *by-path* they follow? No: Let them return to the *old*, till they can clear themselvs the *new* is good: Otherwise, how bitterly soever they lament their wandrings and incertainties, it is not credible but, either pride, or wilfulness, or some unjustifiable interest guides their inward thoughts.

Nephew. These very suspitions, concerning many of my acquaintance, have often run in my fancy; but a certain kindness of nature still sollicited me to pitty their unhappiness; yet, now I see all my inclination to Charity will never be able to frame a tollerable excuse of their perverseness. For, what can they answer to him that should press them? You know, *Tradition* and the *Church* and the *Colliers Faith* was the *old way*, you know, those who follow *that* old way are perplext with no new doubts nor troubled to find a *setled Religion*; you know *Scripture* cannot be its own witness that it self is the *Map* to chuse the right way by, and none of your Ancestors ever taught you any such thing; you know, the *Scriptures* are *hard to be understood* and *pervertable*, *by the ignorant and unstable*, (which comprehends almost all mankind) *to their own destruction.* Is it not, therfore pure *wilfulness*, to cry, you do your utmost endeavours and can find no better? Is it not plain, your endeavours are fruitless, because you take a method of seeking, for which you have no warrant?

Return, then, to the old way and on a sudden, you shall find rest to your Souls. Part not from thence till you have security the *old* way is *false*, till you have security your *new* one is *true*; a quarrel

quarrel wherin all imaginable arguments engage themselvs, in disadvantage of *this* and favour of *that*. So many ancient *Fathers*, in their writings continually call on us to follow still the *old* way and take heed of being seduced into the *new*: So many glorious *Saints* look down from Heaven and sing alow'd to all the World, the *Old* way brought *us* to these joy's, the *new* we never heard of; In fine, our daily experience and common sense demonstrates the *old* way is at least, one *known and constant* way, wheras the *new* seems nothing but a *Maze*, compos'd of a thousand little paths, a thousand times crossing one another.

Uncle. Though you need little help to defend your censure against the exception of *uncharitableness*; yet certainly it must needs encrease our confidence, that all the *Successions of Ages*, since the happy day's of the *Apostles*, have continually kept this great *road* and drawn so many *Nations* to follow them in it; That so infinite a number of learned and vertuous persons now living (who highly reverence the Authority of *Scripture* and disclaim what ever it condemns) seriously and constantly profess they find, in the bosome of the *Church* a perfect tranquillity of mind, and, out of it, see nothing but disquiet in the private *Conscience* and confusion in the publike *Government*.

Nephew. Sir, Having been formerly taught by you, that the best gratitude of a Schollar is perfectly to learn his Masters lesson; I shall, instead of returning thanks, make this faithful promise, To apply the instructions you have given me, and, with such diligence chase them into my head, that they may not only serve to tickle the skin

skin and pleaſe in outward converſation; but inwardly fortifie my underſtanding and beget a ſolid and rational piety in my heart. Only *I* muſt hope this favour, ſince my kind of life leads me often into Company of bold and extravagant principles; that, if I meet any paſſage too hard for me to paſs, I may have the liberty of begging your aſſiſtance to ſet me over; which, I believe my own weakneſs and curioſity will ſoon engage me to a need of; being already threatned with the unanſwerableneſs of certain late Books, whoſe *Authors* are no leſs eſteem'd for the acuteneſs of their wit, then for the Nobility of their Birth; theſe I have undertaken to read and intend to give you account of.

Uncle. *I* believe you'l find thoſe Diſcourſes to have more ſharpneſs then ſolidity, and rather well pointed then ſubſtantially temper'd; So, if your civility perſwade you to think me any way uſeful, *I* ſhall be very ready on all occaſions to endeavour your ſatisfaction; though, before you have long ſuſtaind the ſhock of thoſe gallant Enemies and try'd how far theſe *recruits* will enable you to maintain the Combat, you may perhaps receive intelligence of *new ſupply's* comming into your relief.

FINIS.

Talis vita
Qualis.